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A

CALL

TO THE

UNCONVERTED.

By RICHARD BAXTER.

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A

CALL

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Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

IT has been the wonder of many, to read in the holy scripture, how few will be saved: and that the greatest part even of those that are called, will be shut out of heaven, and tormented with the devils in eternal fire. Infidels believe not this, and therefore must feel it. Those that do believe it, are forced to cry out with Paul, Rom. xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" But nature itself teaches us all to lay the blame of evil works upon the doers; and therefore when we see any heinous thing committed, a principle of justice provokes us to enquire after him that did it. If we saw a man killed, and cut in pieces by the way, we should presently ask, O who did this cruel deed? If a town were set on fire, you would ask, What wicked wretch did this? So when we read that the most will be firebrands of hell for ever, we must needs think with ourselves, How comes this to pass? Who is it that is so cruel as to be the cause of such a thing as this? And we can meet with few that will own the guilt. It is indeed confest by all, that Satan is the cause; but that resolves not the doubt, because he is not the principal cause. He does not force men to sin, but tempt them

to it, and leaves it to their own wills, whether they will do it or not. It lies therefore between God himself and the sinner; one of them must be the principal cause of all this misery; for there is no other to cast it upon: and God disclaims it: he will not take it upon him. And the wicked disclaim it usually, and they will not take it upon them. And this is the controversy which is here carried on in my text.

The Lord complains of the people; and the people think it is the fault of God. They say, ver. 10, "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how shall we then live?" As if they should say, if we must die, how can we help it? As if it were not their fault, but God's. But God, in my text, clears himself of it, and tells them how they may help it if they will, and persuades them to use the means; and if they will not be persuaded, he lets them know that it is their own fault: and if this will not satisfy them, he will not therefore forbear to punish them. It is he that will be the Judge; and he will judge them according to their ways; they are no judges of him or of themselves, as wanting authority, and wisdom, and impartiality: nor is it the cavilling with God, that shall serve their turn, or save them from the execution of Justice.

The words of this verse contain, 1. God's clearing of himself from the blame of their destruction. This he does not by disowning his law, that *the wicked shall die*, nor by disowning his execution according to that law, or giving them any hope that the law shall not be executed; but by professing that it is not their death that he takes pleasure in, but their returning rather, that they may live: and this he confirms to them by his oath. 2. An express exhortation to the wicked to return; wherein God does not only command, but persuade, and condescend also to reason the case with them. Why will they die? The direct end of this exhortation is, That they may turn and live. The secondary ends, upon supposition that this is not attained, are these two. First, to convince them, that it is not the fault of God if they be miserable. Secondly, to convince them from their manifest wilfulness in rejecting all his commands and persuasions, that it is *their own* fault; and they die, even because they will die.

The

The ſubſtance of the text lies in theſe obſervations following:

Doct. 1. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men muſt turn or die.

Doct. 2. It is the promiſe of God, that the wicked ſhall live, if they will turn.

Doct. 3. God takes pleaſure in men's converſion and ſalvation, but not in their death or damnation: he had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

Doct. 4. This is a moſt certain truth, which becauſe God would not have men to queſtion, he has confirmed to them ſolemnly by his oath.

Doct. 5. The Lord redoubles his commands and perſuaſions to the wicked to turn.

Doct. 6. The Lord condeſcends to reaſon the caſe with them, and aſks the wicked, why they will die.

Doct. 7. If after all this the wicked will not turn, it is not the fault of God that they periſh, but of themſelves; their own wilfulneſs is the cauſe of their damnation; they therefore die, becauſe they will die.

Having laid the text open before your eyes in theſe plain propoſitions, I ſhall next ſpeak ſomewhat of each of them in order, though very briefly.

DOCTRINE I.

IT is the unchangeable Law of God, that wicked men muſt turn or die.

If you will believe God, believe this: there is but one of theſe two ways for every wicked man, either Converſion or Damnation. I know, the wicked will hardly be perſuaded either of the truth or equity of this. No wonder if the guilty quarrel with the law. Few men are apt to believe that, which they would not have to be true; and fewer would have that to be true, which they apprehend to be againſt them. But it is not quarrelling with the law, or with the Judge, that will ſave the malefactor. Believing and regarding the law might have prevented his death: but denying and accuſing it, will but haſten it. If it were not ſo, an hundred would bring their reaſons againſt the law, for one that would bring his reaſon to the law: and men would rather chooſe to give their reaſons why they ſhould not

be punished, than to hear the commands and reasons of their Governors which require them to obey. The law was not made for you to judge, but that you might be ruled, and judged by it.

But if there be any so blind as to question either the truth, or the justice of the law of God, I shall briefly give you evidence of both.

And first, If you doubt whether this be the word of God, or not, besides an hundred other texts, you may be satisfied by these few, Matt. xviii. 3, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." John iii. 3, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 2 Cor. v. 17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Heb. xii. 14, "Without holiness no man shall see God." Rom. viii. 8, 9, "They that are in the flesh, cannot please God. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Psalm. ix. 17, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Psalm. xi. 5, "The Lord loveth the righteous, but the wicked his soul hateth."

I need not add any more of that multitude which speak the like: if thou be a man that believest the word of God, here is already enough to satisfy thee, that the wicked must be converted or condemned. You must either confess that this is true, or say plainly, you will not believe the word of God. And if once you be come to that pass, 'tis likely you will not be long out of hell. But if you tell God plainly you will not believe him, blame him not if he never warn you more: for to what purpose should he warn you, if you will not believe him? Should he send an angel from heaven to you, it seems you would not believe. For an angel can speak but the word of God: and if an angel should bring you any other gospel, you are not to receive it, but to hold him accursed. And surely there is no angel to be believed before the Son of God, who came from the Father to bring us this doctrine. And if you stand on these terms with God, I shall leave you till he deal with you in a more convincing way. God has a voice that will make you hear. Though he *intreat* you to

hear

the voice of his gospel, he will *make* you hear the voice of his condemning sentence. We cannot make you *believe* against your wills; but God will make you *feel* against your wills.

But why will you not believe this word of God, which tells us that the wicked must be converted, or condemned? It is because you judge it unlikely that God should be so unmerciful; you think it cruelty to damn men everlastingly for so small a thing as a sinful life. And this leads us to the second thing, which is, to justify the equity of God in his laws and judgments.

And first, I think you will not deny that it is most suitable to an immortal soul, to be ruled by laws which promise an immortal reward, and threaten an endless punishment. Otherwise the law would not be suited to the nature of the subject, who will not be fully ruled by any lower means, than the hopes or fears of everlasting things: as it is in the case of temporal punishment, if a law were now made that the most heinous crimes should be punished with a hundred years captivity, this might be of some efficacy, it being equal to our lives. But if there had been no other penalties before the flood, when men lived eight or nine hundred years, it would not have been sufficient, because men would know, that they might have so many hundred years impunity afterwards. So it is in our present case.

2. When you find in the word of God that *so it is*, and *so it will be*, do you think yourselves fit to contradict this word? Will you call your Maker to the bar; and examine his word? Will you sit upon him, and judge him by the law of your conceits? Are you wiser and better than he? Must the God of heaven come to school to you to learn wisdom? Must infinite wisdom learn of folly? Must the Almighty stand at the bar of a worm? O horrid arrogancy of senseless dust! Shall every mole, or clod, or dunghill, accuse the sun of darkness, and undertake to illuminate the world? Where were you when the Almighty made the laws, that he did not call you to his counsel: surely he made them before you were born, without desiring your advise; and you came into the world too late to reverse them; if you could have done so great a work, you should have

have ſtept out of nothing, and have contradicted Chriſt when he was on earth, or Moſes before him, or have ſaved Adam and his ſinful progeny from the threatened death, that ſo there might have been no need of Chriſt.

3. If ſin be ſuch an evil that it requires the death of Chriſt for its expiation, no wonder if it deſerve our everlaſting miſery.

4. And methinks you ſhould perceive, that it is not poſſible for the beſt of men, much leſs for the wicked, to be competent judges of the deſert of ſin. Alas, we are all both blind and partial. You can never know fully the deſert of ſin, till you fully know the evil of ſin: and you can never fully know the evil of ſin, till you fully know the excellency of the ſoul which it deforms: no, nor till you know the infinite excellency, almightineſs, and holineſs of that God, againſt whom it is committed. When you fully know theſe, you ſhall fully know the deſert of ſin. You know that the offender is too partial to judge the law, or the proceeding of his Judge.

5. Can you think that unholy ſouls are fit for heaven? Alas, they cannot love God here, nor do him any ſervice which he can accept. They are contrary to God, they loathe that which he moſt loves; and love that which he abhors: they are incapable of that imperfect communion with him, which his ſaints here partake of. How then can they live in that moſt perfect love of him, and full delight, and communion with him, which is the bleſſedneſs of heaven!

U S E.

I Beſeech you now all that love your ſouls, that inſtead of quarrelling with God and his word, you will preſently ſtoop to it, and uſe it for your good. You muſt ere long be *converted* or *condemned;* there is no other way, but turn or die. When God, who cannot lie, has told you this, when you hear it from the Maker and Judge of the world; it is time for him that has ears, to hear. By this time you may ſee what you have to truſt to. You are but dead and damned men, except you will be converted. Should I tell you otherwiſe, I ſhould deceive you with a lie. Should I hide this from you, I ſhould undo you, and be guilty of your blood. You ſee then, though this be a rough, unwelcome

unwelcome doctrine, it is such as we must preach, and you must hear. It is easier to hear of hell, than feel it. Hell would not be so full, if people were but willing to know their case, and to hear and think of it. The reason why so few escape it, is, because they strive not to enter in at the strait gate of conversion, and to go the narrow way of holiness, while they have time: and they strive not, because they are not awakened to a lively feeling of the danger that they are in; and they are not awakened, because they are loth to hear, or think of it; and that is partly through foolish tenderness, and carnal self-love; and partly, because they do not well believe the word that threatens it. If you will not thoroughly believe this truth, methinks the weight of it should force you to remember it; and it should follow you, and give you no rest, till you were converted. If you had but once heard this word, by the voice of an angel, Thou must be converted or condemned: turn or die: would it not fasten on your mind, and haunt you night and day? So that in your sinning you would remember it, as if the voice were still in your ears, Turn or die! O happy were your souls, if it might thus work upon you, and never be forgotten, or let you alone till it have driven home your hearts to God. But if you will cast it out by forgetfulness, or unbelief, how can it work to your conversion and salvation? But take this with you to your sorrow, though you may put it out of your minds, you cannot put it out of the Bible: but there it will stand as a sealed truth which you shall experimentally know for ever, that there is no other way but Turn or die.

O what is the reason then that the hearts of sinners are not pierced with such a weighty truth. Believe it, this drowsy, careless temper will not last long. Conversion and condemnation are both of them awakening things; and one of them will make you feel ere long. I can foretel it as truly, as if I saw it with my eyes, that either grace or hell will shortly bring these matters to the quick, and make you say, What have I done? What a foolish wicked course have I taken? The scornful and the stupid state of sinners will last but a little while. As soon as they either turn or die, the presumptuous dream will be at an end; and then their wits and feelings will return. But

But there are two things which are like to harden the unconverted, except they can be taken out of the way; and that is the misunderstanding of those two words, *the wicked*, and *turn*. Some think it is true, the wicked must turn or die: but what is that to me? I am not wicked though I am a sinner, as all men are. Others think, It is true that we must turn from our evil ways; but I am turned long ago. And thus, while wicked men think they are not wicked, but are already converted, we lose all our labour in persuading them to turn. I shall therefore, before I go any farther, tell you, who are meant by the wicked, and who they are that must turn, or die; and also what is meant by turning; and who they are that are truly converted.

You may observe, no man is a wicked man that is converted; and no man is a converted man that is wicked; so that to be a wicked man, and to be an unconverted man, is all one. And therefore in opening one, we shall open both.

Before I can tell you what either wickedness, or conversion is; I must go to the bottom, and fetch up the matter from the beginning.

It pleased the great Creator of the world, to make three sorts of living creatures; Angels he made pure spirits without flesh, and therefore he made them only for heaven, and not to dwell on earth. Brutes were made flesh; and therefore they were made only for earth, and not for heaven. Man is of a middle nature, between both; as partaking of both flesh and spirit, and therefore he was made both for heaven and earth. But as his flesh is made to be but a servant to his spirit, so is he made for earth but as his way to heaven; and not that earth should be his home, or happiness. The blessed state which man was made for, was to behold the glorious Majesty of the Lord, and to praise him among his holy angels; and to love him, and be filled with his love for ever. And as this was the end which man was made for, so God gave him means fitted to attain it. These means were principally two. First, the right inclination and disposition of the mind of man. Secondly, the right ordering of his life and practice. For the first, God suited the disposition of man to his end; giving him such knowledge of God

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as was fit for his present state, and a heart inclined to God in holy love. But yet he did not confirm him in this condition; but, having made him a free agent, he left him in the hands of his own free-will. For the second, God did that which belonged to him; that is, he gave man a perfect law, requiring him to continue in the love of God, and perfectly to obey him. By the wilful breach of this law, man did not only forfeit his hopes of everlasting life, but also turned his heart from God, and fixed it on these lower things; and hereby blotted out the spiritual image of God from his soul. So that man did both fall short of the glory of God which was his end, and put himself out of the way by which he should have attained it; and this both as to the frame of his heart, and of his life. The holy inclination of his soul to God, he lost: and instead of it, he contracted an inclination to the pleasing of his flesh by earthly things! Growing strange to God, and acquainted with the creature: and the course of his life was suited to the inclination of his heart; he lived to his own will and not to God: he sought the creature for the pleasing of his flesh, instead of seeking to please the Lord. With this nature, or corrupt inclination, we are all now born into the world; for, who can bring a clean thing, out of an unclean? Job xiv. 4. As a lion has a fierce and cruel nature, before he does devour: and as an adder has a venomous nature, before she stings; so in our very infancy we have those sinful natures, or inclinations, before we think, or speak, or do amiss. And hence springs all the sin of our lives. And not only so, but when God has, of his mercy, provided us a remedy, even the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Saviour of our souls, and bring us back to God, we naturally love our present state, and are loth to be brought out of it, and therefore are set against the means of our recovery: and though custom has taught us to thank Christ for his good-will, yet we refuse his remedies, and desire to be excused, when we are commanded to take the medicines which he offers, and are called to forsake all, and follow him to God and glory.

In these few words you have a true description of our natural state; and consequently of a wicked man. For every man that is in this state of corrupted nature, is a wicked man, and in a state of death. By

By this you may understand what it is to be *converted:* to which end you must further know, that the mercy of God, not willing that man should perish in his sin, provided a remedy by causing his Son to take our nature upon him, and being in one person, God and man, to become a Mediator between God and man; and by dying for our sins on the cross, to ransom us from the curse of God, and the power of the devil: and having thus redeemed us, the Father has delivered us into his hands, as *his own.* Hereupon the Father and the Mediator make a new law and covenant for man: not like the first, which gave life to none but the perfectly obedient, and condemned man for every sin: but Christ has made a law of grace, or a promise of pardon and everlasting life to all that by true repentance, and by faith in Christ, are converted unto God. Like an act of oblivion, which is made by a prince, to a company of rebels, on condition they will lay down their arms, and come in, and be loyal subjects for the time to come.

But, because the Lord knows that the heart of man is grown so wicked, that men will not accept of the remedy, if they be left to themselves, therefore the Holy Ghost has undertaken it as his office to inspire the Apostles, and seal the scripture by miracles; and to illuminate and convert the souls of men.

So that you see, as there are three persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; so each of these persons have their several works, which are eminently ascribed to them.

The Father's works were, to create us, to rule us, as his rational creatures, by the law of nature; and judge us thereby: and in mercy to provide us a Redeemer when we were lost: and to send his Son, and accept his ransom.

The works of the Son, for us, were these: to ransom, and redeem us by his sufferings and righteousness; to give out the promise or law of grace; and rule and judge the world as their Redeemer, on terms of grace, and to make intercession for us, that the benefits of his death may be communicated, and to send the Holy Ghost, which the Father also does by the Son.

The works of the Holy Ghost, for us, are these: to indite the holy scriptures, by inspiring and guiding the prophets

prophets and apoſtles; and ſealing the word, by his miraculous gifts, and works: and the illuminating, and exciting the ordinary miniſters of the goſpel; and ſo enabling them, and helping them to publiſh that word: and by the ſame word, illuminating, and converting the ſouls of men. So that as you could not have been reaſonable creatures, if the Father had not created you; nor have had any acceſs to God, if the Son had not redeemed you: ſo neither can you be ſaved, except the Holy Ghoſt do ſanctify you.

So you may ſee the ſeveral cauſes of this work. The Father ſends the Son: the Son redeems us, and makes the promiſe of grace: the Holy Ghoſt indites, and ſeals this goſpel: the Apoſtles are the Secretaries of the Spirit to write it: the Preachers of the goſpel proclaim it: and the Holy Ghoſt makes their preaching effectual, by opening the hearts of men to entertain it. And all this to repair the image of God upon the ſoul; and to ſet the heart upon God again, and take it off the creature, to which it is revolted; and ſo to turn the current of the life into a heavenly courſe, which before was earthly; and all this by the entertainment of Chriſt, by faith, who is the phyſician of the ſoul.

By this you may ſee what it is to be *wicked*, and what it is to be *converted*. Which I think will be yet plainer, if I deſcribe them as conſiſting of their ſeveral parts; and for the firſt, a *wicked man* may be known by theſe three things.

Firſt, He is one who places his chief content on earth, and loves the creature more than God; and his fleſhly proſperity above the heavenly felicity: he ſavours the things of the fleſh, but neither diſcerns, nor ſavours the things of the Spirit: though he will ſay, that heaven is better than earth, yet does he not really ſo eſteem it. If he might be ſure of earth, he would let go heaven; and had rather ſtay here, than be removed thither. A life of perfect holineſs, in the ſight of God, and in his love, and praiſes for ever in heaven, do not find ſuch liking with his heart, as a life of health, and wealth, and honour upon earth. And though he falſely profeſs that he loves God above all, yet indeed he never felt the power of divine love, but his mind is more ſet on the world, or fleſhly pleaſures, than on God. In a word, whoever loves earth above

heaven, and fleshly prosperity more than God, is a wicked unconverted man.

On the other side, *a converted man* is enlightened to discern the loveliness of God: and so believes the glory that is to be had with God, that his heart is set more upon it, than on any thing in this world. He had rather see the face of God, and live in his everlasting love, than have all the wealth or pleasure of the world. He sees that all things else are vanity; and nothing but God can fill the soul: and therefore, let the world go which way it will, he lays up treasures and hopes in heaven; and for that he is resolved to let go all. As the fire mounts upward, and the needle that is touched with the load-stone turns to the North: so, the converted soul is inclined to God. Nothing else can satisfy him; nor can he find any content and rest but in his love. In a word, all that are converted, esteem and love God better than all the world; and the heavenly felicity is dearer to them, than their fleshly prosperity.

Secondly, A *wicked man* is one that makes it the principal business of his life, to prosper in the world, and attain his fleshly ends. And though he may read and hear, and do much in the outward duties of religion, and forbear disgraceful sins; yet this is but by the by, and he never makes it the business of his life, to please God, and attain everlasting glory. He puts off God with the leavings of the world, and gives him no more service, than the flesh can spare.

On the contrary, a *converted man* is one that makes it the principal business of his life, to please God, and to be saved; and takes all the blessings of this life, but as accommodations in his journey towards another life, and uses the creature in subordination to God: he loves a holy life, and longs to be more holy; he has no sin, but what he hates; and longs, and prays, and strives to be rid of. The bent of his life is for God: and if he sin, it is contrary to the bent of his heart and life, and therefore he rises again, and laments it, and dare not wilfully live in any known sin. There is nothing in this world so dear to him, but he can give it up to God, and forsake it for the hopes of glory.

Thirdly, The soul of a *wicked man* does not truly discern and relish the mystery of redemption, nor thankfully entertain an offered Saviour, nor is he taken up with the love of the Redeemer, nor is willing to be ruled

by

by him, that he may be saved from the guilt and power of his sins, and recovered unto God: but his heart is insensible of this unspeakable benefit, and is quite against the healing means, by which he should be recovered. He never resigns up his soul to Christ, and to the motions and conduct of his word and spirit.

On the contrary, the *converted* soul having felt himself undone by sin; and perceiving that he has lost his peace with God, and hopes of heaven, and is in danger of everlasting misery, does thankfully entertain the tidings of redemption; and believing in the Lord Jesus as his only Saviour, resigns up himself to him for Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. He takes Christ as the life of his soul, and lives by him, and uses him as a salve for every sore, admiring the wisdom and love of God in this wonderful work of man's redemption. In a word, Christ does even dwell in his heart by Faith, and the life which he now lives is by Faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him. Yea, it is not so much he that lives, as Christ in him.

You see now, who are the wicked, and who are the converted. Ignorant people think, that if a man be no swearer, or curser, or railer, or drunkard, or fornicator, or extortioner, nor wrong any body in his dealings, and if he go to church, and say his prayers, he cannot be a wicked man. Or if a man who has been guilty of drunkenness, swearing, or the like vices, do but forbear them, they think that this is a converted man. Others think, if a man who has been an enemy and scorner of religion, do but now approve of it, and join himself with good men, and be hated for it by the wicked, that this must needs be a converted man. And some are so foolish as to think they are converted, by taking up some new opinion; or by falling into some party, as Anabaptists, Quakers, Papists, or such like. And some think, if they have but been affrighted by the fears of hell, and thereupon have proposed, and promised amendment, and taken up a civil behaviour, and outward religion, this must needs be true conversion. And these are the poor deluded souls that are like to lose the benefit of all our persuasions: and when they hear that the wicked must *turn or die*, they think that this is not spoken to them; for they are not *wicked*, but are

turned already. And therefore it is that Christ told some of the Rulers of the Jews, who were more moral and civil than the common people, that publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before them, Matt. xxi. 31. Not that a harlot or gross sinner can be saved without conversion; but because it was easier to make these gross sinners perceive their sin and the necessity of a change.

O Sirs, conversion is another kind of work, than most are aware of: it is not a small matter to shew man the excellencies of God, till he be taken up with such love to him as cannot easily be quenched; to break the heart for sin, and make him fly for refuge to Christ, and thankfully embrace him as the life of his soul; to have the very bent of the heart and life changed; so that he renounces that which he took for his felicity, and places his felicity where he never did before; and lives not to the same end, and drives not on the same design in the world, as formerly he did. "He that is in Christ, is a new creature: old things are past away; behold, all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. He has a new understanding, a new will and resolution, new sorrows, and desires, and love, and delight; new thoughts, new speeches, new company (if possible,) and a new conversation. Sin which before was a jesting matter with him, is now so odious, that he flies from it, as from death. The world which was so lovely in his eyes, does now appear but as vanity and vexation; God who was before neglected, is now the only happiness of his soul; before, he was forgotten; but now he is next the heart, and all things must give place to him: and the heart is taken up in the attendance, and observance of him: and is grieved when he hides his face, and never thinks himself well without him. Christ himself who was wont to be slightly thought of, is now his only hope and refuge, and he lives upon him, as on his daily bread; he cannot pray without him, nor rejoice without him. Heaven itself which before was looked upon but as a tolerable reserve, which he hoped might serve better than hell, when he could not stay any longer in the world, is now taken for his home, the place of his only hope and rest, where he shall see, and love, and praise that God who has his heart already. The Bible which was before to him but as a common

book,

book, is now as the law of God, as a letter written to him from heaven, and subscribed with the name of the *Eternal Majesty;* it is the rule of his thoughts, and words, and deeds; the commands are binding, and the promises of it speak life to his soul. In short, he has a new end in his thoughts, and a new way in his endeavours, and therefore his heart and life are new. So that this is not a change in one or two, or twenty points; but in the whole soul and conversation.

Do you believe this, Sirs, or do you not? Surely you dare not say, you do not. These are not controversies, where one pious man is of one mind, and another, of another; all Christians are agreed in this, and if you will not believe the God of truth, and that in a case were *every* sect and party believe him, you are utterly inexcusable.

But if you do believe this, how comes it to pass that you live so quietly in an unconverted state? Do you know that you are converted? Can you find this wonderful change upon your souls? Have you been thus born again, and made anew? If you cannot tell the day or week of your change, do you find that the work is done? And that you have such hearts as are before described? Alas, the most follow their worldly business, and little trouble their mind with such thoughts. And if they be but restrained from scandalous sins, and can say, I am no whoremonger, or thief, or curser, or swearer, or tipler, or extortioner, I go to church, and say my prayers, they think this is true conversion, and they shall be saved as well as any. Alas, this is a foolish cheating of yourselves. This is too gross neglect of your immortal souls. Can you make so light of heaven and hell? Your corpses will shortly lie in the dust, and angels or devils will presently seize upon your souls, and every man and woman of you all will shortly be among other company, and in another case than now you are; you will dwell in those houses but a little longer; you will work in your shops, and fields, but a little longer; you will sit in these seats, and dwell on this earth but a little longer; you will see with those eyes, and hear with those ears, and speak with those tongues but a little longer; and can you forget this? O what a place will you be shortly in of joy or torment! O what a sight will you shortly see in heaven or hell!

O what thoughts will ſhortly fill your hearts with unſpeakable delight or horror! What work will you be employed in? To praiſe the Lord with ſaints and angels, or to cry out in fire unquenchable with devils? And ſhould all this be forgotten? And all this will be endleſs, and ſealed up by an unchangeable decree. Eternity, eternity will be the meaſure of your joys or ſorrows, and can this be forgotten? And all this is true, moſt *certainly true:* when you have gone up and down a little longer, and ſlept and awaked a few times more, you will be dead and gone, and find all true which now I tell you; and can you now forget it! You ſhall then remember that you heard this ſermon, and that on this day and in this place you were remembered of theſe things; and yet ſhall they be now ſo much forgotten?

Beloved, if the Lord had not awakened me to believe and lay to heart theſe things myſelf, I ſhould have periſhed for ever: but if he has made me ſenſible of them, it will conſtrain me to compaſſionate you. If your eyes were ſo far opened as to ſee hell, and you ſaw your neighbours, that were unconverted, dragged thither with hideous cries, though they were ſuch as you accounted honeſt people on earth; ſuch a ſight would make you warn all about you, leſt they ſhould go to that place of torment. Why, faith is a kind of ſight; it is the eye of the ſoul, the evidence of things not ſeen; if I believe God, it is next to ſeeing: and therefore I beſeech you excuſe me, if I be as earneſt with you about theſe matters, as if I had ſeen them. If I were to die to morrow, and it were in my power to come again from another world, and tell you what I have ſeen; would you not be willing to hear me? And would you not believe, and regard what I ſhould tell you? If I might preach one ſermon to you after I am dead, and have ſeen what is done in the world to come, would you not lay it to heart? But this muſt not be; God has his appointed way of teaching you; and he will not humour unbelievers ſo far as to ſend men from the dead to them, and to alter his eſtabliſhed way: if any man quarrel with the Sun, God will not humour him ſo far as to ſet him up a clearer light. Friends, I beſeech you regard me now, as you would do if I ſhould come from the dead to you; for I can

give

give you as full assurance of the truth of what I say to you, as if I had been there, and seen it with my eyes; for it is possible for one from the dead to deceive you: but Jesus Christ can never deceive you: the word of God delivered in Scripture, and sealed up by the miracles, and holy workings of the Spirit, can never deceive you. Believe this, or believe nothing. Believe, and obey this, or you are undone: now as ever you believe the word of God, and as ever you care for the salvation of your souls, let me beg of you this reasonable request; that you would without any more delay, when you are gone from hence, remember what you heard, and enter into an earnest search of your hearts, and say unto yourselves,—Is it so indeed? Must I turn or die? Must I be converted or condemned? It is time for me then to look about me, before it be too late. O why did I not look after this till now? Why did I venturously put off so great a business? Was I awake! O blessed God, what a great mercy is it that thou didst not cut off my life all this while? Well, God forbid that I should neglect this work any longer. What state is my soul in? Am I converted, or am I not? Was ever such a work done upon my soul? Have I been illuminated by the word and Spirit of the Lord, to see the odiousness of sin, the need of a Saviour, the love of Christ, and the excellencies of God and glory? Is my heart broken, or humbled within me, for my former life? Have I thankfully entertained my Saviour and Lord, who offered himself with pardon and life to my soul? Do I hate my former sinful life, and the remnant of every sin that is in me? Do I fly from them as my deadly enemies? Do I give up myself to a life of holiness? Do I love it, and delight in it? Can I truly say that I am dead to the world; and that I live for God, and the glory which he has promised? Has heaven more of my estimation than earth? And is God the dearest and highest in my soul? Once, I am sure, I lived principally to the world and flesh, and God had nothing but some heartless services, which the world could spare, and which were the leavings of the flesh. Is my heart now turned another way? Have I a new design, and a new end, and a new train of holy affections? Have I set my hopes, and heart on heaven?

And

And is it the design of my heart and life, to get well to heaven, and see the glorious face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praise? Do I conquer all gross sins, and am I weary, and willing to be rid of mine infirmities? This is the state of a converted soul. And thus must it be with me, or I must perish. Is it thus with me indeed, or is it not? It is time to get this doubt resolved before the dreadful Judge resolve it. I am not such a stranger to my own heart and life, but I may perceive whether I am thus converted, or not: if I be not, it will do me no good to flatter my soul with false hopes. I am resolved no more to deceive myself, but endeavour to know truly, whether I am converted; that if I be, I may rejoice in it, and glorify my gracious Lord, and comfortably go on till I reach the crown: but if I be not, I may beg and seek after the grace that will convert me, and turn without any delay: for, if I find in time that I am out of the way, by the help of Christ I may turn and be recovered: but if I stay till either my heart be forsaken of God in blindness and hardness, or till I be caught away by death; it is then too late. There is no place for repentance, and conversion then; I know it must be now or never.

Sirs, this is my request to you, that you will but take your hearts to task, and thus examine them till you see, if it may be, whether you are converted or not? It undoes many thousands that they think they are in the way of salvation, when they are not; and that they are converted, when it is no such thing. And then when we call to them daily to *turn*, they think this concerns not them; for they are turned already, and hope they shall do well enough in the way that they are in; when, alas, all this while they live to the world and flesh, and are strangers to God and eternal life. And all this, because we cannot persuade them to spend a few hours in the examining of their states. Are there not many self-deceiving wretches that hear me this day, who never bestowed one hour in all their lives, to examine their souls, and try whether they were truly converted or not? O merciful God, who will care for such wretches that care no more for themselves? If all that are in the state of damnation, did but know it, they durst not continue in it. The greatest

greateſt hope that the devil has of bringing you to damnation without a reſcue, is by keeping you blindfold, and making you believe that you may do well enough in the way that you are in. If you knew that you were loſt for ever, if you ſhould die as you are; durſt you ſleep another night in the ſtate that you are in? Durſt you live another day in it? Could you laugh, or be merry in ſuch a ſtate? What! And not know but you may be ſnatched away to hell in an hour! Sure it would conſtrain you to forſake your former company, and courſes; and to betake yourſelves to the ways of holineſs. Sure it would drive you to cry to God for a new heart, and to ſeek help of thoſe who are fit to counſel you. There is none of you, ſure, *that cares not* for being damned. Well, then I beſeech you preſently make enquiry into your hearts, and give them no reſt, till you find out your condition; that, if it be good, you may rejoice in it, and go on; and if it be bad, you may preſently look about you for recovery, as men who believe they muſt *turn, or die.* What ſay you? Will you reſolve, and promiſe to be at ſo much labour for your own ſouls? Will you fall upon this ſelf-examination when you go home? Is my requeſt unreaſonable? Your conſciences know, it is not: reſolve on it then, before you ſtir; knowing how much it concerns your ſouls. I beſeech you for the ſake of that God who does command you, at whoſe bar you will ſhortly all appear, that you will not deny me this reaſonable requeſt. For the ſake of thoſe ſouls that muſt *turn, or die,* I beſeech you deny me not; make it your buſineſs to underſtand your own conditions, and build upon ſure ground, and know for a certainty, whether you are converted, or no; and venture not your own ſouls on negligent ſecurity.

But perhaps you will ſay, What if we ſhould find ourſelves yet unconverted, what ſhall we do then? This queſtion leads me to my ſecond doctrine.

DOCTRINE II.

"IT is the promiſe of God, that the wicked ſhall live, "if they will turn to him."

The Lord here profeſſes that this is what he takes pleaſure in, that the wicked *turn and live.* *Turn and live,*

live, is as certain a truth, as *turn or die*. Sinners, there are none of you ſhall have cauſe to go home, and ſay I preach deſpair to you. Are we uſed to ſhut up the door of mercy againſt you? O that you would not ſhut it up againſt yourſelves! Are we uſed to tell you that God will have no mercy on you, though you turn? When did you hear a Preacher ſay ſuch a word? You that bark at the Preachers of the goſpel for deſiring to keep you out of hell, and ſay, that they preach deſpair; tell me, when did you ever hear any ſober man ſay, that there is no hope for you, though you repent, and be converted? No, it is quite the contrary which we daily proclaim from the Lord; that whoever is born again, ſhall be ſaved: ſo far are we from perſuading you to deſpair of this, that we perſuade you not to make any doubt of it. It is life, and not death, which is the firſt part of our meſſage to you; our commiſſion is to offer ſalvation, a ſpeedy, glorious, everlaſting ſalvation to every one of you; to the pooreſt beggar, as well as the greateſt lord; to the worſt of you, even to drunkards, ſwearers, thieves, yea, to the deſpiſers and reproachers of the holy way of ſalvation: we are commanded by the Lord our Maſter to offer you a pardon for all that is paſt, if you will now at laſt return and live; we are commanded to beſeech and intreat you to accept the offer, and to tell you what preparation is made by Chriſt, what mercy ſtays for you; what patience waiteth on you; what thoughts of kindneſs God has towards you: and how happy, how certainly and unſpeakably happy you may be if you will. We have indeed alſo a meſſage of wrath and death: yea, of a two-fold wrath and death: but neither of them is our principal meſſage: we muſt tell you of the wrath that is on you already, and the death that you are born under: but this is only to ſhew you the need of mercy. For who will ſeek out for phyſic, that knows not he is ſick? Our telling you of your miſery, is not that which makes you miſerable, but that which drives you to ſeek for mercy. It is you that have brought this death upon yourſelves. We tell you alſo of another death, and much greater torment, which will fall on thoſe who will not be converted. But as this is true; ſo it is but the laſt, and ſaddeſt part of our meſſage. We are firſt to offer you mercy, if you will turn: and it

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it is only thoſe that will not turn, nor hear the voice of mercy, to whom we muſt foretel damnation. If you will caſt away your tranſgreſſions, and come at the call of Chriſt, and be converted, we have not a word of damning wrath, or death to ſpeak againſt you. I do here in the name of the Lord of life proclaim to you all, to the worſt of you, to the greateſt, to the oldeſt ſinner, that you may have mercy and ſalvation, if you will but turn. There is mercy in God, there is ſufficiency in the ſatisfaction of Chriſt, the promiſes is free, and full, and univerſal; you may have life, if you will but turn. But then, as you love your ſouls, remember what turning it is which the Scripture ſpeaks of. It is not to mend the old houſe, but to pull down all, and build anew, on Chriſt the Rock and ſure foundation.

Yourſelves are witneſſes now, that it is ſalvation, and not damnation, which is the great doctrine I preach to you; and the firſt part of my meſſage to you. Accept of this, and we ſhall go no farther; for we would not trouble you with the name of damnation, without neceſſity.

But if you will not be ſaved, there is no remedy, but damnation muſt take place. For there is no middle place between the two: you muſt have either life, or death.

And we are not only to offer you life; but to ſhew you the grounds on which we do it, and call you to believe that God does mean, indeed, as he ſpeaks: that the promiſe is true, and extends conditionally to *you* as well as others

If you aſk, where is our commiſſion for this offer?—Among a hundred texts of Scripture, I will ſhew it to you in theſe few.

Firſt, you ſee it here in my text, and the following verſes, and in the 18th of Ezekiel as plain as can be ſpoken. And in 2 Cor. v. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, you have the very ſum of our commiſſion: "If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature: old things are paſt away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt, and hath given us the miniſtry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf; not imputing their treſpaſſes to them; and hath committed

committed unto us the word of reconciliation: now then we are ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us, we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled unto God: for he hath made him to be ſin for us, who knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him"

You ſee that we are commanded to offer life to *you all*, and to tell you from God, that if you will *turn*, you may *live*.

Here you may ſafely truſt your ſouls; for the love of God is the fountain of this offer, John iii. 16, and the blood of the Son of God has purchaſed it: the faithfulneſs and truth of God are engaged to make the promiſe good: miracles have ſealed the truth of it: Preachers are ſent through the world to proclaim it: the ſacraments are inſtituted for the ſolemn delivery of the mercy offered, to them that will accept it: and the Spirit opens the heart to entertain it, and is itſelf the earneſt of the full poſſeſſion. So that the truth of it is paſt controverſy, that the worſt of you all, and every one of you, if you will but be converted, may be ſaved.

Indeed, if you believe that you ſhall be ſaved without converſion, then you believe a falſehood; and if I ſhould preach that to you, I ſhould preach a lie: this were not to believe God, but the devil and your own deceitful hearts. God has his promiſe of life, and the devil has his promiſe of life. God's promiſe is, *return and live*; the devil's promiſe is, *you ſhall live, whether you turn or not*. The words of God are as I have ſhewed you, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 3. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. 5. "Without holineſs none ſhall ſee God," Heb. xii. 14. The devil's word, you may be ſaved without being born again or converted; you may do well enough without being holy; God does but frighten you, he is more merciful than to do as he ſays, he will be better to you than his word. And alas, the greateſt part of the world believe this word of the devil, before the word of God: juſt as our firſt ſin and miſery came into the world. God ſaid to our firſt parents, If ye eat, ye ſhall die. And the devil contradicts him,

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and ſays, Ye ſhall not die: and the woman believed the devil before God. So now the Lord ſaith, *turn or die:* and the devil ſays, you ſhall not die, if you do but cry to God for mercy at laſt. And this is the word which the world believes. O heinous wickedneſs, to believe the devil before God!

And yet, that is not the worſt: but blaſphemouſly they call this a believing and truſting God, when they put him in the ſhape of Satan, who was a lyar from the beginning: and when they believe that the word of God is a lie, they call this a *truſting God*, and ſay they believe in him, and truſt on him for ſalvation. Where did ever God ſay, that the unconverted ſhall be ſaved? Shew ſuch a word in Scripture. I challenge you if you can. Why this is the devil's word, and to believe it, is to believe the devil. And do you call this believing and truſting God? There is enough in the word of God to comfort and ſtrengthen the hearts of the ſanctified: but not a word to ſtrengthen the hands of wickedneſs, or to give men the leaſt hope of being ſaved, though they be never ſanctified.

But if you will *turn*, and come into the way of mercy, the mercy of the Lord is ready to entertain you. Then truſt God for ſalvation, boldly, and confidently; for he is engaged by his word to ſave you. He will be a father to none but his children, and he will ſave none but thoſe that forſake the world, the devil, and the fleſh, and come into his family to be members of his Son, and have communion with his ſaints. But if they will not come in, it is their own fault: his doors are open. He keeps none back: he is ſtill ready to receive you, if you were but ready unfeignedly, and with all your hearts to *turn*. And the fulneſs of this truth will yet more *appear* in the two following doctrines.

DOCTRINE III.

GOD takes pleaſure in men's converſion, and ſalvation; but not in their death and damnation: he had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

For the *proof* of this point, I ſhall be very brief, becauſe I ſuppoſe you believe it already.

1. The *gracious nature* of God has proclaimed, and frequently assured you of this: that he has no pleasure in your death.

2. If God had more pleasure in thy death, than in thy conversion and life, he would not have so frequently commanded thee in his word, to turn; he would not have made thee such promises of life, if thou wilt turn: he would not have persuaded thee to it by so many reasons. The tenor of his *gospel* proves the point.

3. And his commission which he has given to the Ministers of the gospel, does fully prove it. If God had taken more pleasure in thy damnation, than in thy conversion and salvation, he would never have charged us to offer you mercy, and to teach you the way of life, both publicly, and privately; and to intreat, and beseech you to turn and live; to acquaint you with your sins, and tell you of your danger; and to do all that possibly we can for your conversion, and to continue patiently so doing, though you should hate or abuse us for our pains. Would God have done this, if he had taken pleasure in your death?

4. It is proved also by the course of his providence. If God had rather you were damned, than saved, he would not second his word with his works, and entice you by his daily kindness, and give you all the mercies of this life, which are means to lead you to repentance, Rom. ii. 4, and so bring you so often under his rod, to force you into your wits: he would not set so many examples before your eyes, no, nor wait on you so patiently as he does from day to day, and year to year. These are not signs of one that takes pleasure in your death. If *this* had been his delight, how easily could he have had thee long ago in hell? How oft before this, could he have snatched thee away in the midst of thy sins with a curse, or oath, or lie in thy mouth? When thou wast laid in thy drunkenness or deriding the ways of God, how easily could he have stopt thy breath, and made thee sober in another world! Alas, how small a matter is it for the Almighty to rule the tongue of the profanest railer, and tie the hands of the most malicious persecutor, or calm the fury of the bittrest of his enemies, and make them know that they are but worms? If he did but frown upon thee,

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thou wouldſt drop into thy grave. If he gave commiſſion to one of his angels to go and deſtroy ten thouſand ſinners, how quickly would it be done! how eaſily can he lay thee upon the bed of languiſhing, and make thee lie roaring there in pain, and eat the words of reproach which thou haſt ſpoken againſt his ſervants, his word, his worſhip, and his holy ways? How eaſily can he lay that fleſh under groans, and make it more loathſome than the dung of the earth? That fleſh, which now muſt have what it loves, and muſt not be diſpleaſed, though God be diſpleaſed; and muſt be humoured in meat, and drink, and clothes, whatever God ſay to the contrary, how quickly would the frown of God conſume it? When thou waſt paſſionately defending thy ſin, and quarrelling with them that would have drawn thee from it, and pleading for the works of darkneſs; how eaſily could God have ſnatched thee away in a moment, and ſet thee before his dreadful Majeſty, (where thou ſhouldſt ſee ten thouſand times ten thouſand glorious angels waiting on his throne) and have aſked thee, What haſt thou now to ſay againſt thy Creator, his truth, his ſervants, or his holy ways? Now plead thy cauſe, and make the beſt of it thou canſt. Now what canſt thou ſay in excuſe of thy ſins? Now give account of thy time, and of all the mercies thou haſt had. O how thy ſtubborn heart would have melted, and thy countenance have been appalled, and thy ſtout words turned into ſpeechleſs ſilence, or dreadful cries; if God had but ſet thee thus at his bar, and pleaded his own cauſe with thee! How eaſily can he at any time ſay to thy guilty ſoul, Come away, and live in that fleſh no more, till the reſurrection. And it cannot reſiſt. A word of his mouth would take off the poiſe of thy preſent life, and then all thy parts and powers would ſtand ſtill. And if he were to ſay to thee, Live no longer, or live in hell; thou couldſt not diſobey.

But God has done none of this; but has patiently forborn thee, and mercifully upheld thee; and given thee that breath which thou didſt breathe out againſt him, and given thee thoſe mercies which thou didſt ſacrifice to thy fleſh, and afforded thee that proviſion which thou ſpenteſt to ſatisfy thy greedy appetite: he gave thee every minute of that time which thou

didſt waſte in idleneſs or drunkenneſs. And does not all this patience and mercy ſhew that he deſires not thy damnation? Can the candle burn without the oil? Can your houſes ſtand without the earth to bear them? As well as you can live an hour without the ſupport of God. And why did he ſo long ſupport thy life, but to ſee when thou wouldſt bethink thee of the folly of thy ways, and return and live? Will any man purpoſely put arms into his enemies' hands to reſiſt him? Or hold a candle to a murderer who is killing his children? Surely it is to ſee whether thou wilt at laſt return and live, that God has ſo long waited on thee.

5. It is further proved by the ſufferings of his Son, that God takes no pleaſure in the death of the wicked: would he have ranſomed them from death at ſo dear a rate? Would he have aſtoniſhed angels and men by his condeſcenſion? Would God have dwelt in fleſh, and have come in the form of a ſervant, and have lived a life of ſuffering, and died a curſed death for ſinners, if he had taken pleaſure in their death? Suppoſe you ſaw him praying with the drops of blood trickling from him inſtead of ſweat, or ſuffering a curſed death upon the croſs, and pouring out his ſoul as a ſacrifice for our ſins: would you have thought theſe the ſigns of one that delights in the death of the wicked? If you had ſeen and heard him weeping and bemoaning the ſtate of diſobedience in impenitent people, or complaining of their ſtubbornneſs, as Matt. xxiii. 37. "O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, how oft would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?" Or if you had ſeen and heard him on the croſs, praying for his perſecutors, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do; would you have ſuſpected that he had delighted in the death of the wicked; even of thoſe that periſh by their wilful unbelief? When God hath ſo loved, (not only loved, but ſo loved) as to give his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life: he has proved againſt the malice of men and devils, that he takes no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that they would *turn* and *live*.

6. Laſtly, If all this will not ſatisfy you, take his own word, who knows beſt his own mind, or at leaſt

leaſt believe his oath: but this leads me to the fourth Doctrine.

DOCTRINE IV.

THE Lord has confirmed to us by his oath, that he has no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that he ſhould turn and live: that he may leave man no pretence to queſtion the truth of it.

If you dare queſtion his word, I hope you dare not queſtion his oath. As Chriſt has ſolemnly proteſted that the unconverted cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven: ſo God has ſworn that his pleaſure is not in their death, but in their converſion and life. And as the Apoſtle ſays, Heb. vi. 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, "Becauſe he could ſwear by no greater, he ſware by himſelf. For men verily ſwear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them as an end of all ſtrife. Wherein God willing more abundantly to ſhew unto the heirs of promiſe the immutability of his counſel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impoſſible for God to lie, we might have a ſtrong conſolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope ſet before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the ſoul both ſure and ſtedfaſt." If there be any man who cannot reconcile this truth with the damnation of the wicked, that is owing to his own ignorance: he has no pretence left to deny or queſtion therefore the truth of the point in hand: for this is confirmed by the oath of God, and therefore muſt not be diſtorted to reduce it to other points; but doubtful points muſt rather be reduced to it, and certain truths muſt be believed to agree with it, though our ſhallow brains hardly diſcern the agreement.

USE.

I Do now intreat thee, if thou be an unconverted ſinner, who heareſt theſe words, that thou wouldſt bethink thyſelf awhile, who it is that takes pleaſure in thy ſin and damnation? Certainly it is not God; he has ſworn for his part, that he takes no pleaſure in it. And I know it is not the pleaſing of him that you intend in it. You dare not ſay, that you drink and ſwear,

and neglect holy duties, and quench the motions of the Spirit, to please God. That were as if you should reproach the prince, and break his laws, and seek his death, and say, You did all this to please him.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin and death? Not any that bear the image of God, for they must be like minded to him. God knows, it is small pleasure to your Teachers to see you wilfully run into the flames of hell. Alas, to foresee your everlasting torments, and know not how to prevent them, is to see how near you are to hell, and we cannot make you believe it, and consider it. To see how easily, how certainly you might escape, if we knew but how to make you willing! How fair you are for everlasting salvation, if you would but turn and do your best, and make it the care and business of your lives! But you will not do it! Do you think that this is a pleasant thing to us?

Again, It is none of your godly friends. Alas, it is the grief of their souls to see your misery, and they lament for you many a time when you give them little thanks for it, and when you have not hearts to lament yourselves.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin? It is none but three great enemies of God, whom you renounced in your baptism.

1. The devil takes pleasure in your sin and death: for this is the end of all his temptations. You cannot please him better than to go on in sin: how glad is he when he sees thee go to the alehouse, and when he hears thee curse, or swear, or rail? These are his delight.

2. The wicked are also delighted in it: for it is agreeable to their nature.

3. But I know, for all this, that it is not the pleasing of the devil, that you intend: but it is your *own flesh*, the greatest and most dangerous enemy. It is the flesh that would be pleased in meat, and drink, and cloathing, that would be pleased in company and in applause and credit with the world; and this is the gulph that devours all. This is the very god you serve. For the Scripture says of such, "That their belly is their god," Phil. iii. 19.

But I beseech you stay a little, and consider the business. Your

Your *flesh* is pleased with your sin: but is your *conscience* pleased? Does not *it* tell you sometimes that all is not well, and that your case is not so safe as you make it to be? And should not your soul and conscience be pleased before that corruptible flesh? Again, Is not your *flesh* preparing for its *own displeasure* also? It loves the bait; but does it love the hook? It loves the strong drink and sweet morsels; it loves its ease, and sports, and merriment; it loves to be rich, and well spoken of by men, and to be somebody in the world: but does it love the curse of God? Does it love to stand trembling before his bar, and to be judged to everlasting fire? Does it love to be tormented with devils for ever? Take all together; for there is no separating sin and hell; if you will keep one, you must have the other. If death and hell be pleasant to you, no wonder then if you go on in sin: but if they be not, then what if sin were ever so pleasant, is it worth the loss of life eternal? Is a little drink, or meat, or ease; is the good word of sinners, or the riches of the world to be valued above the joys of heaven? Or are they worth the sufferings of eternal fire? These questions should be considered before you go any further, by every man that hath reason to consider, and believes he has a soul to save or lose.

Well, the Lord here swears that he has no pleasure in your death, but had rather that you would turn and live. If yet you will go on, and die rather than turn, remember it was not to *please God* that you did it; it was to please the world, and to please yourselves. And if men will damn themselves, to please themselves, and run into endless *torments* for *delight*; what remedy but they must take what they get by it, and repent it in another manner, when it is too late!

DOCTRINE V.

SO earnest is God for the conversion of sinners, that he doubles his commands and exhortations with vehemency; "Turn ye, Turn ye, why will you die?"

Is there ever an unconverted sinner that hears these vehement words of God? Is there ever a man or woman that is yet a stranger to the renewing, sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost? Hearken then to

the

the voice of your Maker, and turn to him by Chriſt without delay. Would you know the will of God? Why this is his will, that you preſently turn. Shall the living God ſend ſo earneſt a meſſage to his creatures, and ſhould they not obey? Hearken then, all ye that live after the fleſh; the Lord that gave thee thy breath, has ſent a meſſage to thee from heaven; and this is his meſſage, "Turn ye, Turn ye, why will ye die?" He that has ears to hear, let him hear. Shall the voice of the eternal Majeſty be neglected? If he do but terribly thunder, thou art afraid. O but *this* voice does more nearly concern thee. If he did but tell thee, thou ſhalt die to-morrow, thou wouldſt not make light of it. O but this word concerns thy life, or death everlaſting. It is both a command, and an exhortation. As if he had ſaid to thee, "I charge thee upon the allegiance which thou oweſt to me thy Creator and Redeemer, that thou renounce the fleſh, the world, and the devil, and turn to me, that thou mayeſt live. I condeſcend to intreat thee, as thou either loveſt or feareſt him that made thee: as thou loveſt thine own life, even thine everlaſting life, Turn and Live: as ever thou wouldſt eſcape eternal miſery, Turn, turn, for why wilt thou die?" And is there a heart in man, in a reaſonable creature, that can refuſe ſuch a meſſage, ſuch a command, ſuch an exhortation as this! O what a thing then is the heart of man!

Hearken then, all ye that love yourſelves, and all that regard your own ſalvation; here is the joyfulleſt meſſage that ever was ſent to the ears of man, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? You are not ſhut up under deſperation. Here is mercy offered you; Turn, and you ſhall have it. With what joyful hearts ſhould you receive theſe tidings! I know this is not the firſt time that you have heard them; but how have you regarded them, or how do you regard them now? Hear, all you ignorant, careleſs ſinners, the word of the Lord? Hear, all ye gluttons, drunkards, whoremongers, and ſwearers; railers and backbiters, ſlanders and liars: Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?

Hear, all ye cold, and outſide profeſſors, all that are ſtrangers to the life of Chriſt, and never knew the power of his reſurrection, never felt your hearts warmed with his love; Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?

Hear

Hear, all that are void of the love of God, whose hearts are not toward him, nor taken up with the hopes of glory, but set more on earthly prosperity and delights, than on the joys of heaven; all you that are religious but by the by, and give God no more than your flesh can spare; that have not denied yourselves, and forsaken all that you have for Christ; but have some one thing in the world so dear to you, that you cannot spare it for him, but will rather venture on his displeasure than forsake it, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die.

If you never heard it, or observed it before, Remember that you were told from the word of God this day, that if you will but turn, you may live; and if you will not turn, you shall surely die.

What now will you do? What is your resolution? Will you turn, or will you not? Halt no longer between two opinions: if the Lord be God, follow him: if your flesh be God, then serve it still. If heaven be better than earth, come away and seek a better country, and lay up your treasure where rust and moths do not corrupt, or thieves break through and steal; and with all your might, seek the kingdom that cannot be moved: employ your lives on a higher design, and turn the stream of your care and labours another way than formerly you have done. But if earth be better than heaven, then keep it, and make your best of it, and follow it still. Are you resolved what to do? If you be not, I will set a few more considerations before you.

Consider, first, What preparations mercy has made for your salvation: and what pity it is that any man should be damned after all this. God has made to thee a free act of oblivion, and a free deed of gift of Christ and life, and offers it to thee, and intreats thee to accept it, and it may be thine if thou wilt. For, he was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Sinners, we are commanded to deliver this message to you all, as from the Lord, Come, for all things are now ready, Luke xiv. 17. Are all things ready, and are you unready? God is ready to pardon all that you have done against him, if you will but come. As long as you have sinned, as wilfully as you have sinned, as heinously

ouſly as you have ſinned, he is ready to caſt all behind his back, if you will but come. Though you have been prodigals, and run away from God, and have ſtaid ſo long, he is ready to meet you, and embrace you in his arms, if you will but turn. Even the ſwiniſh drunkards may find God ready to bid them welcome, if they will but come. Does not this turn thy heart within thee? O ſinner, if thou have an heart of fleſh, and not of ſtone, methinks this ſhould melt it. Shall the dreadful infinite Majeſty of heaven wait for thy returning, and be ready to receive thee, who haſt abuſed him, and forgotten him ſo long? Shall he delight in thy converſion, who might at any time glorify his juſtice in thy damnation, and yet does it not melt thy heart within thee, and art thou not yet ready to come in? Haſt thou not as much reaſon to be ready to come, as God has to invite thee, and bid thee welcome?

Chriſt has done his part on the Croſs, and made ſuch way for thee to the Father, that on his account thou mayeſt be welcome, if thou wilt come. And yet art thou not ready?

A pardon is already expreſsly granted, and offered thee in the goſpel. And yet art thou not ready?

The Miniſters of the goſpel are ready to aſſiſt thee, to inſtruct thee, and pronounce peace to thy ſoul; they are ready to pray for thee, and to ſeal thy pardon by the adminiſtration of the holy ſacrament, and yet art thou not ready?

Yea, Heaven itſelf is ready: the Lord will receive thee into the glory of his ſaints, as vile a beaſt as thou haſt been, if thou wilt but be cleanſed: thou mayſt have a place before his throne: his angels will be ready to guard thy ſoul to the place of joy, if thou do but unfeignedly come in. And is God ready, the ſacrifice of Chriſt ready, and pardon ready? Are miniſters ready, and heaven itſelf ready, and angels ready, and all theſe waiting for thy converſion; and yet art thou not ready? What not ready to live, when thou haſt been dead ſo long? Not ready to come to thy right underſtanding, when thou haſt been beſides thyſelf ſo long? Art thou not ready to lay hold on Chriſt, who would deliver thee, when thou art even ready to drown and ſink into damnation? Art thou not ready to be ſaved from hell, when thou art ready to be caſt into it?

it? Alas, man! doſt thou know what thou doſt? If thou die unconverted, there is no doubt to be made of thy damnation: and thou art not ſure to live an hour: and yet art thou not ready to turn, and to come in? O miſerable wretch! haſt thou not ſerved the fleſh and the devil long enough? Haſt thou not yet enough of ſin? Is it ſo good to thee, or ſo profitable for thee? Doſt thou know what it is, that thou wouldſt yet have more of it? Haſt thou had ſo many calls, and ſo many mercies, and ſo many blows, and ſo many examples: haſt thou ſeen ſo many laid in the grave, and yet art thou not ready to let go thy ſins, and come to Chriſt? What, after ſo many convictions, and gripes of conſcience, after ſo many purpoſes, and promiſes, art thou not yet ready to turn and live? O that thy eyes, thy heart were opened to know how fair an offer is now made to thee! and what a joyful meſſage it is that we are ſent on, to bid thee come, for all things are ready.

2. Conſider alſo what calls thou haſt to turn and live. How many, how loud, how earneſt, how dreadful, and yet what encouraging joyful calls?

For the principal inviter, it is God himſelf. He that commands heaven and earth, commands thee to turn, and now without delay, to turn: he commands the ſun to run its courſe, and to riſe upon thee every morning; and though it is ſo glorious a creature, yet it obeys him, and fails not one minute of its appointed time. He commands all the planets, and the orbs of heaven, and they obey; he commands the ſea to ebb and flow, and the whole creation to keep its courſe, and all obey him: the angels of heaven obey his will, when he ſends them to miniſter to ſuch ſilly worms as we on earth. And yet if he command but a ſinner to turn, he will not obey him: he only thinks himſelf wiſer than God, and he cavils and will not obey.

If thou hadſt any love in thee thou wouldſt know the voice and ſay, O this is my Father's call! how can I find in my heart to diſobey? If thou hadſt any ſenſe in thee, at leaſt thou wouldſt ſay, This call is the dreadful voice of God, and who dare diſobey? God is not a man that thou ſhouldſt trifle and play with him: wilt thou yet go on, and deſpiſe his word, and reſiſt his Spirit, and ſtop thine ear againſt his call? Who

is

is it that will have the worſt of this? Doſt thou know whom thou diſobeyeſt, and contendeſt with, and what thou art doing? It were a far wiſer and eaſier taſk for thee to contend with the thorns, and ſpurn them with thy bare feet, and beat them with thy bare hands, or put thy head into the burning fire. Be not deceived, God will not be mocked. Whoever elſe be mocked, God will not: you had better play with the fire in your thatch, than with the fire of his burning wrath. "For our God is a conſuming fire," Heb. xii. 29. O how unmeet a match art thou for God! "It is a fearful thing to fall into his hands," Heb. x. 31. And therefore it is a fearful thing to contend with him, or to reſiſt him. As you love your own ſouls, take heed what you do. What will you ſay, if he begin in wrath to plead with you? What will you do, if he take you once in hand? Will you then ſtrive againſt his judgment, as now ye do againſt his grace? "Who would ſet the briars and thorns againſt me in battle? I would go through them: I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my ſtrength, that he may make peace with me, and he ſhall make peace with me." It is an unequal combat for the briars and ſtubble to make war with the fire.

You ſee, Who it is that calls you. Conſider alſo, by what inſtruments, and how often and how earneſtly he does it.

1. Every leaf of the bleſſed book of God has as it were a voice, and calls out, "Turn and live; turn or thou wilt die." How canſt thou open it, or read a leaf, or hear a chapter, and not perceive God bids thee *Turn*.

2. The voice of many a motion of the Spirit ſecretly urges thee to *Turn*.

3. The voice of *Conſcience*. Art thou not ſometimes convinced that all is not well with thee? and does not thy conſcience tell thee that thou muſt be a new man, and take a new courſe.

4. The voice of all the works of God. For they alſo are God's books, that teach thee this leſſon, by ſhewing thee his greatneſs, and wiſdom, and goodneſs, and calling thee to obſerve them, and admire the Creator, Pſalm xix. 1, 2. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy-

handy-work. Day unto day uttereth ſpeech, and night unto night ſheweth knowledge." Every time the ſun riſes upon thee, it calls thee to *turn*, as if it ſhould ſay, "What do I travel and compaſs the world for, but to declare to men the glory of their Maker, and to light them to do his work? And do I ſtill find thee doing the work of ſin, and ſleeping out thy life in negligence? Awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light."

5. The voice of every mercy thou doſt poſſeſs. If thou couldſt but hear and underſtand them, they all cry unto thee *turn:* why does the earth bear thee, but to ſeek, and ſerve the Lord? Why does it afford thee its fruit, but to ſerve him? Why does the air afford thee breath, but to ſerve him? Why do all the creatures ſerve thee with their labours, and their lives: but that thou mighteſt ſerve the Lord of them and thee? Why does he give thee time, and health and ſtrength, but to ſerve him? Why haſt thou meat, and drink, and clothes, but for his ſervice? Haſt thou any thing which thou haſt not received? And if thou didſt receive them, it is reaſon thou ſhouldſt bethink thee, *from* whom, and *to what end*, and *uſe*, thou didſt receive them. Didſt thou never cry to him for help in thy diſtreſs? And didſt thou not then underſtand that it was thy part to turn and ſerve him, if he would deliver thee! He has done his part, and ſpared thee yet longer, and tried thee another, and another year; and yet doſt thou not turn? How many years has God looked for the fruits of love and holineſs from thee, and has found none? And yet he has ſpared thee. How many a time by thy wilful ignorance, and careleſſneſs and diſobedience, haſt thou provoked juſtice to ſay, "Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground." And yet mercy has prevailed, and patience has forborn the killing, damning blow, to this day. If thou hadſt the underſtanding of a man within thee, thou wouldſt know that all this calls thee to *Turn*.

6. Moreover, the voice of every affliction calls thee to make haſte and turn. Sickneſs and pain cry *Turn;* and poverty, and loſs of friends, and every chaſtiſing rod cry *Turn;* and *yet* wilt thou not hearken to the call?

7. Yea, thine own engagements by promiſe to the Lord, call upon thee to turn and ſerve him. Thou haſt bound thyſelf to him by a baptiſmal covenant, and renounced the world, the fleſh, and the devil: this thou haſt confirmed by the profeſſion of chriſtianity, and renewed it at ſacraments, and in times of affliction: and wilt thou promiſe and vow, and never perform and turn to God?

Lay all theſe together now. The holy ſcripture calls upon thee to Turn; the Spirit cries Turn: thy conſcience: the whole world, and all the creatures therein cry Turn: the patient forbearance of God cries Turn: all the mercies thou receiveſt cry Turn: the rod of God's chaſtiſement cries Turn: and ſo do all thy promiſes to God; and yet art thou not reſolved to turn?

8. Moreover, poor hard-hearted ſinner! Didſt thou ever conſider upon what terms thou ſtandeſt all this while with him who calls on thee to Turn: thou art his own, and oweſt him thyſelf and all thou haſt; and may he not command his own? Thou art his abſolute ſervant, and ſhouldſt ſerve no other maſter. Thou ſtandeſt at his mercy, and thy life is in his hand: and he is reſolved to ſave thee upon no other terms: thou haſt many malicious, ſpiritual enemies, who would be glad if God would but forſake thee, and let them alone with thee, and leave thee to their will: how quickly would they deal with thee in another manner? And thou canſt not be delivered from them, but by turning unto God. Thou art fallen under his wrath by thy ſin already: and thou knoweſt not how long his patience will yet wait. Perhaps this is the laſt year; perhaps the laſt day: his ſword is even at thy heart, while the word is in thine ear; and if thou turn not, thou art a dead man. Were thy eyes but open to ſee where thou ſtandeſt, even upon the brink of hell, and to ſee how many thouſands are there already, thou wouldſt ſee that it is time to look about thee.

O what glad tidings would it be to thoſe that are now in hell, if they had but ſuch a meſſage from God! what a joyful word would it be to hear this, *Turn and live:* yea, what a welcome word would it be to thyſelf, if thou hadſt felt that wrath of God but an hour! Or, if after a thouſand, or ten thouſand years tor-

ment,

ment, thou couldſt but hear ſuch a word from God "*Turn and live.*" And yet wilt thou now neglect it, and ſuffer us to return without our errand?

Behold, ſinners, we are ſent here as the meſſengers of the Lord, to ſet before you life and death: what ſay you? which of them will you chooſe? Chriſt ſtands as it were by thee, with heaven in one hand, and hell in the other, and offers thee thy choice; which wilt thou chooſe? The voice of the Lord maketh the rocks to tremble. But is it nothing to hear him threaten thee, if thou wilt not turn? Doſt thou not underſtand and feel this voice, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? Why, it is the voice of Love, of infinite Love, of thy beſt and kindeſt friend; and yet canſt thou neglect it? It is the voice of pity and compaſſion. The Lord ſees whither thou art going, better than thou doſt, which makes him call after thee, Turn, Turn! he ſees what will become of thee, if thou turn not: he thinks with himſelf, Ah, this poor ſinner will caſt himſelf into endleſs torments if he does not turn: I muſt in juſtice deal with him according to my righteous law: and therefore he calls after thee, Turn, Turn, O ſinner! If you did but know the thouſandth part as well as God does, of the danger that is near you, and the miſery you are running into, we ſhould have no more need to call after you to Turn.

Well, are you yet reſolved, or are you not? Do I need to ſay any more to you? What will you do? Will you turn or not? Speak man in thy heart to God: ſpeak, leſt he take thy ſilence for denial. Speak quickly, leſt he never make thee the like offer more. Speak reſolvedly, and not waveringly; for he will have no indifferents to be his followers. Say in thy heart now without any more delay, even before thou ſtir hence, By the grace of God I am reſolved preſently to turn. And becauſe I know mine own inſufficiency, I am reſolved to wait on God for his grace, and to follow him in his ways, and forſake my former companions, and give up myſelf to the guidance of the Lord.

DOCTRINE VI.

THE Lord condeſcends to reaſon the caſe with unconverted ſinners, and to aſk them why they will die!

A ſtrange diſputation it is, both as to the controverſy: and as to the diſputants.

1. The controverſy, or queſtion propounded, Why wicked men will damn themſelves? Or, Why they will rather die than turn? Whether they have any ſufficient reaſon for ſo doing?

2. The diſputants are God and man: the moſt holy God, and wicked unconverted ſinners.

Is it not a ſtrange thing, that any man ſhould be willing to die, and be damned? Yea, that this ſhould be the caſe of the greateſt part of the world? But you will ſay, This cannot be; for nature deſires the preſervation of itſelf.

I anſwer, 1. It is a certain truth that no man can will any evil as evil, but only as it has ſome appearance of good. Miſery, as ſuch, is deſired by none. 2. But yet, it is moſt true that the cauſe why the wicked die and are damned, is becauſe they will die and be damned. And this is true in ſeveral reſpects.

1. They will go the way that leads to hell; though they are told by God, and man, whither it leads; and though God has ſo often profeſſed in his word, that if they hold on in that way, they ſhall be condemned; and that they ſhall not be ſaved, unleſs they turn. They have the word, and the oath of the living God for it, that if they will not turn, they ſhall not enter into his reſt. And yet, wicked they are, and wicked they will be, let God and man ſay what they will. So that conſequently theſe men are willing to be damned, though not directly: they chuſe the way to hell, and love the certain cauſe of their torments: though they do not will hell itſelf, and do not love the pain which they muſt endure.

Is not this the truth of your caſe? You would not burn in hell; but you will caſt yourſelves into it. You would not be tormented with devils for ever, but you will do that which will certainly procure it. It is as if you would ſay, I will drink this ratſbane; but I will not die. I will caſt myſelf headlong from the top of a ſteeple, yet I will not kill myſelf: I will thruſt this knife into my heart, but I will not take away my life. Juſt ſo it is with wicked men; they will be wicked, and yet they would not be damned. But do you not know that God has by his righteous law concluded that

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you must repent or perish? He that will take poison, may as well say plainly, I will kill myself; for it will prove no better in the end; though perhaps he loved it for the sweetness of the sugar that was mixt with it, and would not be persuaded that it was poison; but it is not his conceit and confidence that will save his life. So if you will be drunkards, or fornicators, or worldlings, or live after the flesh, you may as well say plainly, we will be damned: for so you shall be, unless you turn. Would you not rebuke the folly of a thief, or murderer, that would say, I will steal or kill, but I will not be hanged, when he knows if he do the one, the Judge will see that the other be done? If he say, I will steal and murder, he may as well say plainly, I will be hanged; and if you will go on in a carnal life, you may as well say plainly, We will go to hell.

2. Moreover, The wicked will not use those means, without which there is no hope of their salvation. He that will not eat, may as well say plainly he will not live, unless he can tell how to live without meat. He that will not go his journey, may as well say plainly, he will not come to the end of it. He that falls into the water, and will not come out, or suffer another to help him out, may as well say plainly, I will be drowned. So if you be ungodly, and will not be converted, or use the means by which you should be converted, you may as well say plainly, you will be damned. For if you have found out a way to be saved without conversion, you have done that which was never done before.

So that you may see on what ground it is that God supposes that the wicked will their own destruction; they will not turn, though they must turn or die; they will rather venture on certain misery, than be converted; and then to quiet themselves in their sins, they make themselves believe that they shall nevertheless escape.

3. And as this controversy is matter of wonder, so are the disputants too. That God should stoop so low, as thus to plead the case with man; and that men should be so strangely blind, and obstinate, as to need all this in so plain a case, yea, and to resist all this, when their own salvation lies upon the issue.

No wonder if they will not hear us, who are men, when they will not hear the Lord himself: as God says, Ezek. iii. 7, when he sent the prophet to the Israelites, The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent, and hard-hearted. But, Woe unto him (saith the Lord) that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth: shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? Isa. xlv. 9.

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WHAT sayest thou, unconverted wretch? Darest thou venture upon a dispute with God? Art thou able to confute him? Art thou ready to enter the lists? God asks thee, Why wilt thou die? Art thou furnished with a sufficient answer? Wilt thou undertake to prove that God is mistaken? O what an undertaking is that? Why, either he or you is mistaken, when he is for your conversion, and you are against it; he calls upon you to turn, and you will not; he bids you do it presently, even to-day, while it is called to-day, and you delay, and think it time enough hereafter. He says it must be a total change, and you must be holy, and new creatures; and you think it is enough to patch up the old man, without becoming new. Who is in the right now? God, or you? God calls on you to turn, and to live a holy life, and you will not; by your disobedient lives, it appears *you will not*. If you will, why do you not? Why have you not done it all this while? And why do you not fall upon it yet? Your wills have the command of your lives. We may certainly conclude that you are unwilling to turn, when you do not turn. And *why will you* not? Can you give any reason for it, that is worthy to be called a reason?

It can be no good reason which is against the God of truth. That cannot be light which is contrary to the sun. There is no knowledge in any creature, but what it had from God; and therefore none can be wiser than God. It were damnable presumption for the highest angel to compare with his Creator: what is it then for a lump of dirt, an ignorant sot, that knows not himself, nor his own soul, that knows but little of

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the things which he ſees, to ſet himſelf againſt the wiſdom of the Lord? It is one of the fulleſt diſcoveries of the horrible wickedneſs, and the ſtark-madneſs of ſinners, that ſo ſilly a mole dare contradict his Maker, and call in queſtion the word of God.

And as I know that God muſt needs be in the right, ſo I know the caſe is ſo palpable which he pleads againſt, that no man can have reaſon for it. Is it poſſible that a man can have any reaſon to break his maſter's laws? Reaſon to diſhonour the Lord of glory? Reaſon to abuſe the Lord that bought him? Is it poſſible that a man can have any good reaſon to damn his own immortal ſoul? Mark the Lord's queſtion, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? Is eternal death a thing to be deſired? Are you in love with hell? What reaſon have you, wilfully to periſh? If you think you have ſome reaſon to ſin, ſhould you not remember that Death is the wages of ſin? And think whether you have any reaſon to undo yourſelves, body and ſoul for ever. You ſhould not only aſk whether you love the adder, but whether you love the ſting? Is it ſuch a thing for a man to caſt away his everlaſting happineſs, that no good reaſon can be given for it: but the more any one pleads for it, the madder he ſhews himſelf to be. Had you a lordſhip, or a kingdom offered you for every ſin that you commit, it were not reaſon, but madneſs to accept it. Could you by every ſin obtain the higheſt thing on earth, that fleſh deſires, it were of no conſiderable value to perſuade you to commit it. If it were to pleaſe your greateſt or deareſt friends, or to obey the greateſt Prince on earth, or to ſave your lives, or to eſcape the greateſt earthly miſery; all theſe are of no conſideration, to draw a man to the committing of one ſin. If it were a right hand, or a right eye that would hinder your ſalvation, it is the gainfulleſt way to cut it off, or pluck it out. For there is no ſaving a part, when you loſe the whole. So exceeding great are the matters of eternity, that nothing in this world deſerves to be named in compariſon with them; nor can any earthly thing, though it were life, or crowns, or kingdoms, be a reaſonable excuſe for the negleſt of matters of everlaſting conſequence. Heaven is ſuch a thing, that if you loſe it, nothing can ſupply

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the want, or make up your loſs: and hell is ſuch a thing, that if you ſuffer it, nothing can remove your miſery, or give you eaſe and comfort. And therefore nothing can be a valuable conſideration to excuſe you for neglecting your own ſalvation: What ſhall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul?

O that you did but know what matters they are which we are now ſpeaking of! There is never a ſoul in hell but knows, by this time, that it was a mad exchange to let go heaven for fleſhly pleaſure; and that it is not a little mirth, or pleaſure, or worldly riches, or honour, that will make him a ſaver that loſes his ſoul.

If you ſee a man put his hand into the fire till it burn off, you will marvel at it; but this is a thing which a man may have reaſon for; as Biſhop Cranmer had, when he burnt off his hand for ſubſcribing to Popery. If you ſee a man cut off a leg, or an arm, it is a ſad ſight; but this is a thing that a man may have a good reaſon for: as many a man does, to ſave his life. If you ſee a man give his body to be burnt to aſhes, and refuſe deliverance when it is offered; this is a hard caſe to fleſh and blood: but this a man may have good reaſon for, as many hundred Martyrs have done. But for a man to run into the fire of hell; this is a thing which can have no reaſon in the world to juſtify it. For heaven will pay for the loſs of any thing we can loſe to get it, or for any labour which we beſtow for it. But nothing can pay for the loſs of heaven.

I beſeech you now let this word come nearer to your hearts. As you are convinced that you have no reaſon to deſtroy yourſelves, tell me what reaſon you have to refuſe to turn and live to God? What reaſon has the moſt ignorant, careleſs ſinner of you all, that he ſhould not be as careful for his ſoul as any other? Will not hell be as hot to you as to others? Should not your own ſouls be as dear to you as theirs to them? Has not God as much authority over you? Why then will you not become a ſanctified people, as well as they?

And now either you have reaſon for what you do, or you have not. If not; will you go on againſt reaſon

ſon itſelf? But you think you have; reaſon the caſe a little with me your fellow-creature, which is far eaſier than to reaſon the caſe with God. Tell me, man, here before the Lord, as if thou wert to die this hour, why ſhouldſt thou not reſolve to turn this day, before thou ſtir from the place thou ſtandeſt in? What reaſon haſt thou to deny, or to delay? Haſt thou any reaſon that ſatisfies thine own conſcience for it? Or any that thou dareſt plead at the bar of God? If thou haſt, let us hear them, bring them forth. But alas, what nonſenſe, inſtead of reaſons, do we daily hear from ungodly men?

1. One ſays, "If none ſhall be ſaved but ſuch ſanctified ones as you talk of, heaven will be but empty: God help a great many."

What! It ſeems you think that God does not know, or elſe that he is not to be believed! Meaſure not all by yourſelves; God has thouſands and millions of his ſanctified ones: but yet they are few in compariſon of the world. It better becomes you to make that uſe of this truth which Chriſt teaches you: "Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; for ſtrait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to deſtruction, and many they be that go in thereat."

Object. 2. "I am ſure, if ſuch as I go to hell, we ſhall have ſtore of company."

Anſw. And will that be any eaſe, or comfort to you? Or do you think you may not have company enough in heaven? Will you be undone for company? Or will you not believe that God will execute his threatenings, becauſe there are ſo many that are guilty?

Object. 3. "But I am no whoremonger, nor drunkard, nor oppreſſor; and therefore why ſhould you call upon me to be converted."

Anſw. As if you were not born after the fleſh, and had not lived after the fleſh as well as others! Is it not as great a ſin as any of theſe, for a man to have an earthly mind, and to love the world above God, and to have an unbelieving, unhumbled heart? Nay, let me tell you more, that many perſons who avoid diſgraceful ſins, are as faſt glued to the world, and as much ſlaves to the fleſh, and as great ſtrangers to God,

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and averſe to heaven, as others are in their more ſhameful notorious ſins.

Object. 4. "But I mean nobody any harm, nor do any harm; and why then ſhould God condemn me?"

Anſw. Is it no harm to neglect the Lord that made thee, and the work for which thou cameſt into the world, and to prefer the creature before the Creator, and to neglect grace which is daily offered thee? It is the depth of thy ſinfulneſs to be ſo inſenſible of it: the dead feel not that they are dead. If once thou wert alive, thou wouldſt ſee enough amiſs in thyſelf, and marvel at thyſelf for making ſo light of it.

Object. 5. "I think you would make men mad, under pretence of converting them."

Anſw. 1. Can you be madder than you are already? Or at leaſt can there be a more dangerous madneſs, than to neglect your everlaſting welfare, and will undo yourſelves?

A man is never well in his wits till he be converted; he never knows God, nor knows ſin, nor knows Chriſt, nor knows the world, nor himſelf, nor what his buſineſs is on earth, ſo as to ſet himſelf about it. It is a wiſe world, when men will run into hell for fear of being out of their wits.

2. What is there in the work which Chriſt calls you to, that ſhould drive a man out of his ſenſes? Is it the loving God, and calling upon him, and thinking of the glory to come, and the forſaking our ſins, and loving one another, and delighting ourſelves in the ſervice of God? Are theſe ſuch things as make men mad?

3. And whereas you ſay that theſe matters are too high for us; are the matters which we are made for, and which we live for, too high for us to meddle with? This is plainly to un-man us, and to make beaſts of us, as if we were like them that muſt meddle with no higher matters than what belong to fleſh and earth. If heaven be too high for you to think on, it will be too high for you ever to poſſeſs.

4. If God ſhould ſometimes ſuffer any weak-headed perſons to be diſtracted by thinking of eternal things; this is becauſe they miſunderſtand them, and run without a guide. But of the two, I had rather be in the caſe of ſuch a one, than in that of the mad unconverted

verted world, who take their diſtraction to be their wiſdom.

Object. 6. "I do not ſee that it goes any better with thoſe who are ſo godly, than with other men. They are as poor, and in as much trouble as others."

Anſw. And perhaps much more ſo, when God ſees it meet. They take not earthly proſperity for their wages. They have laid up their treaſure in another world, or elſe they are not chriſtians. The leſs they *have*, the more is *behind*; and they are content to wait till then.

Object. 7. "When you have ſaid all that you can, I am reſolved to hope well, and truſt in God, and do as well as I can, and not make ſo much ado."

Anſw. 1. Is that doing as well as you can, when you will not turn to God, but your heart is againſt his holy ſervice? It is as well as you *will* indeed: but that is your miſery.

2. My deſire is, that you ſhould hope in God: but for what is it that you will hope? Is it to be ſaved, if you turn and be ſanctified? For this you have God's promiſe; and therefore hope for it, and ſpare not. But if you hope to be ſaved without converſion; this is not to hope in God, but in Satan. For God has given you no ſuch promiſe, but told you the contrary: but it is Satan that made you ſuch promiſes, and railed you to ſuch hopes.

What ſay you, unconverted ſinners? Have you any good reaſon to give, why you ſhould not turn, and preſently turn with all your hearts? Or will you go to hell in deſpite of reaſon itſelf? Conſider what you do in time, for it will ſhortly be too late to conſider. Can you find any fault with God, or his work, or wages? Is he a bad maſter? Is the devil whom you ſerve, a better? Is there any harm in a holy life? Is a life of ungodlineſs better? Do you think in your conſciences that it would do you any harm to be converted, and live a holy life? What harm can it do you? Is it harm to you to have the Spirit of Chriſt within you? And to have a purified heart? Is it evil to be like God? Is it not ſaid that God made man in his image? Why, this holineſs is his image: this Adam loſt, and this Chriſt by his word and ſpirit would reſtore to you, as he does to all that will be

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ſaved. Tell me truly, as before the Lord; though you are loth to live a holy life, had not you rather die in the caſe of thoſe that do ſo, than of others? If you were to die this day, had not you rather die in the caſe of a converted man, than of the unconverted? Of a holy, and heavenly man, than of a carnal, earthly man? And would you not ſay as Balaam, Numb. xxiii. 10, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his?" And why will you not now be of the mind which you will be of then? Firſt, or laſt, you muſt come to this; either to be converted, or to wiſh you had been, when it is too late.

But what is it that you are afraid of loſing, if you turn? Is it your friends? You will but change them: God will be your Friend, and Chriſt, and the Spirit, will be your Friend, and every Chriſtian will be your Friend. You will get one friend that will ſtand you in more ſtead than all the friends in the world could have done. The friends you loſe would but have enticed you to hell, but could not have delivered you; but the friends you get will ſave you from hell, and bring you to eternal reſt.

Is it your pleaſures that you are afraid of loſing? You think you ſhall never have a merry day again, if once you be converted. Alas, that you ſhould think it a greater pleaſure to live in fooliſh ſports and merriments, than live in the love of God, and in righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt. If it be a greater pleaſure to you to think of your lands and inheritance (if you were Lord of all the country) than it is to a child to play for pins; why ſhould it not be a greater joy for you to think of the kingdom of heaven being yours, than of all the riches or pleaſures of the world? I have had myſelf but a little taſte of the heavenly pleaſures in the fore-thoughts of the bleſſed day, and in the preſent perſuaſion of the Love of God in Chriſt; but I have taken too deep a draught of earthly pleaſures; and yet I muſt profeſs from that little experience, that there is no compariſon: there is more joy to be had in a day (if the Sun of life ſhine clear upon us) in the ſtate of holineſs, than in a whole life of ſinful pleaſures. It is but your unſanctified nature, that makes a holy life ſeem grievous to you. If you will turn, the Holy Ghoſt will give you another

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nature, and then it will be more pleasant to you to be rid of your sin, than now it is to keep it: and you will then say, that you knew not what a comfortable life was till now, and that it was never well with you till God and holiness were your delight.

DOCTRINE VII.

IF after all this, men will not turn, it is not the fault of God that they are condemned, but of themselves, even their own wilfulness. They die because they will die. that is, because they will not turn.

If you will go to hell, what remedy; God here acquits himself of your blood: it shall not lie on him, if you be lost. A negligent Minister may draw it upon himself; and those that encourage you, or hinder you not in sin, may draw it upon themselves; but be sure of it, it shall not lie upon God. The Lord says, concerning his unprofitable vineyard, Isa. v. 3, 4, "Judge, I pray, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" What could he have done more? He has made you men, and endued you with reason? He has furnished you with all external necessaries, all creatures are at your service; he has given you a righteous perfect law. When you had broke it, and undone yourselves, he had pity on you, and sent his Son by a miracle of condescending mercy to die for you, and be a sacrifice for your sins, and he was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. The Lord Jesus has made you a deed of gift of himself, and eternal life with him, on the condition you will but accept it, and return. He has on this reasonable condition offered you the free pardon of all your sins; he has written this in his word, and sealed it by his Spirit, and sent it you by his Ministers: they have made the offer to you an hundred, and an hundred times, and called you to accept it, and turn to God. They have in his Name intreated you, and reasoned the case with you, and answered all your frivolous objections. He has long waited on you, and stayed your leisure, and suffered you to abuse him to his face. He has mercifully sustained you in the midst of your sins: he has compassed you about with all sorts of mercies; he has also intermixed afflictions to remind you of your folly, and

call you to your senses: and his Spirit has been often striving with your hearts, and saying, "Turn, sinner, turn to him that calls thee? Whither art thou going? What art thou doing? Dost thou know what will be the end? How long wilt thou hate thy friends, and love thine enemies? When wilt thou let go all, and turn, and deliver up thyself to God, and give thy Redeemer the possession of thy soul? When shall it once be?" These pleadings have been used with thee. And when thou hast delayed, thou hast been urged to make haste, and God has called to thee, "To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your heart:" Why not now without any more delay? Life has been set before you; the joys of heaven have been opened to you in the gospel; the certainty of them has been manifested: the certainty of the everlasting torments of the damned has been declared to you. Unless you would have had a sight of heaven and hell, what could you have desired more? Christ has been, as it were, set forth crucified before your eyes. You have been a hundred times told, that you are but lost men till you come to him: as often you have been told of the evil of sin, of the vanity of sin, the world, and all the pleasures and wealth it can afford; of the shortness and uncertainty of your lives, and the endless duration of the joy, or torment of the life to come. All this, and more than this you have been told, and told again; and though all this has not converted you, yet you are alive, and might have mercy this day, if you had but hearts to entertain it. And now let Reason itself be judge: whether it be the fault of God or you, if after all this you will be unconverted and be damned! If you die now, it is because you will die. What could be said more to you? Or what course can be taken, that is likelier to prevail? Are you able to say, and make it good, We would fain have been converted, and become new creatures, but we would not; we would have fain forsaken our sins, but could not; we would have changed our company, and our thoughts, and our discourse, but we could not. Why could you not, if you would? What hindered you but the wickedness of your hearts? Who forced you to sin? Or who held you back from duty? Did God put in any exceptions against you in his word, when he invited

vited sinners to return; and when he promised mercy to those who do return? Did he say, "I will pardon all that repent except thee?" Did he shut you out from the liberty of his holy worship? Did he forbid you to pray to him any more than others? You know he did not. God did not drive you away from him, but you ran away yourselves. And when he called you to him, you would not come. If God had excepted you out of the general promise and offer of mercy; or had said to you, "Stand off, I will have nothing to do with such as you, pray not to me, for I will not hear you: if you repent ever so much, and cry for mercy ever so much, I will not regard you:" then you had a fair excuse. You might have said, "To what end should I repent and turn, when it will do no good?" But this was not your case. You might have had Christ to be your Lord and Saviour, your Head and Husband as well as others, and you would not, because you felt not yourself sick enough for the Physician; and because you could not spare your disease; in your hearts you said as those rebels, Luke xix. 14, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Christ would have gathered you under the wings of his salvation, and you would not. What desires of your welfare did the Lord express in his holy word? With what compassion did he stand over you and say, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and that they had walked in my ways! O that there were such a heart in this people, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! O that they were wise, that they understood this! And that they would consider their latter end!" He would have been your God, and done all for you that your souls could desire: but you loved the world and your flesh above him, and therefore you would not hearken to him: though you complimented with him, and gave him high titles, yet when it came to the closing, you would have none of him. No marvel then, if He gave you up to your own hearts lusts, and you walked in your own counsels. He condescends to reason, and pleads the case with you, and asks you "What is there in me, or my service, that you should be so much against me! What harm have I done thee,

ſinner! Have I deſerved this unkind dealing at thy hand! Many mercies have I ſhewed thee; for which of them doſt thou thus deſpiſe me? Is it I, or is it Satan, that is thy enemy? Is it I, or is it thyſelf, that would undo thee? Is it a holy life, or a life of ſin which thou haſt cauſe to fly from? If thou be undone, thou procureſt this to thyſelf, by forſaking me the Lord that would have ſaved thee." "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people, and unwiſe? Is he not thy Father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and eſtabliſhed thee?" Deut. xxxii. 6. When he ſaw that you forſook him even for nothing, and turned away from your Lord, to hunt after the chaff and feathers of the world, he told you of your folly, and called you to a more profitable employment, Iſa. lv. 2, 3, "Wherefore do ye ſpend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which ſatisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your ſoul delight itſelf in fatneſs. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your ſoul ſhall live; and I will make an everlaſting covenant with you, even the ſure mercies of David." And when you would not hear, what complaints have you put him to, charging it on you as your wilfulneſs and ſtubbornneſs! "Be aſtoniſhed, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid.—For my people have committed two evils: they have forſaken me the Fountain of living waters: and hewed them out ciſterns, broken ciſterns that can hold no water." Many a time has Chriſt proclaimed the free invitation to you, Rev. xxii. 17, "Let him that is athirſt, come: and whoſoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But you oblige him to complain after all his offers, "They will not come unto me that they may have life," John v. 40. He has invited you to a feaſt with him in the kingdom of his grace; and you have had excuſes from your grounds, and your cattle, and your worldly buſineſs, and when you would not come, you ſaid you could not: and provoked him to reſolve, that you ſhould never taſte of his ſupper. And whoſe fault is it now but your own? And what can you ſay is the chief cauſe of your damnation, but your own *Wills?* You would be damned.

USE.

U S E.

1. FROM hence you may see, not only what blasphemy and impiety it is, to lay the blame of men's destruction upon God; but also how unfit these wicked wretches are to bring in such a charge against their Maker. They cry out against God, and say, He gives them not grace, and his threatenings are severe, and God forbid that all should be damned that are not converted; and they think it hard measure that a short sin should have an endless suffering: and if they be damned, they say, they cannot help it: when, in the mean time, they are busy about their own destruction, even cutting the throat of their own souls, and will not be persuaded to hold their hands. They think God would be cruel, if he should damn them: and yet they are so cruel to themselves, that they will run into the fire of hell, when God has told them it is a little before them: and neither intreaties nor threatenings, nor any thing that can be said, will stop them. We see them almost undone: their careless, worldly lives tell us that they are in the power of the devil; we know if they die before they are converted, all the world cannot save them: and knowing the uncertainty of their lives, we are afraid every day lest they drop into the fire. And therefore we intreat them to pity their own souls, and not to undo themselves when mercy is at hand; and they will not hear us. We intreat them to cast away their sin, and come to Christ without delay, and to have some mercy on themselves; but they will have none. And yet they think, that God must be cruel, if he condemn them. O wilful, wretched sinners! It is not God that is cruel to you; it is you that are cruel to yourselves. You are told you must turn or burn, and yet you turn not. You are told that if you will keep your sins, you shall keep the curse of God with them; and yet you will keep them. You are told that there is no way to happiness but by holiness, and yet you will not be holy. What would you have God say more to you? What would you have him do with his mercy? He offers it you, and you will not have it. You are in the ditch of sin and misery, and he would give you his hand to help you

out, and you refuse his help: he would cleanse you from your sins, and you would rather keep them. Would you have him bring you to heaven, whether you will or no? Or would you have him bring you and your sins to heaven together? Why, that's an impossibility; you may as well expect he should turn the sun into darkness. What! an unsanctified heart be in heaven? It cannot be: "There nothing entereth that is unclean," Rev. xxi. 27. "All the day long hath he stretched out his hand to a disobedient and gain-saying people." What will you do now? Will you cry to God for mercy? Why God calls upon you to have mercy upon yourselves, and you will not. Ministers see the poisoned cup in the drunkard's hand, and tell him, There is poison in it, and desire him to have mercy on his soul, and forbear, and he will not hear us: drink it he must and will: he loves it, and therefore though hell comes next, he says he cannot help it. What should one say to such men as these? We tell the ungodly, "It is not such a life that will serve the turn, or ever bring you to heaven. If a bear was at your back, you would mend your pace: and when the curse of God is at your back, and Satan and hell are at your back, will you not stir, but ask, what needs all this ado? Is an immortal soul of no more worth? O have mercy upon yourselves!" But they will have no mercy on themselves. We tell them, the end will be bitter. Who can dwell with everlasting fire? And yet they will have no mercy upon themselves. And will these shameless wretches say, that God is more merciful than to condemn them? When it is themselves that cruelly run upon condemnation, and we cannot stop them. If we fall down on our knees to them, we cannot stop them; but to hell they will go, and yet will not believe that they are going thither. If we beg of them for the sake of God that made them, and preserves them; for the sake of Christ who died for them; for the sake of their own poor souls, to pity themselves, and go no further in the way to hell, but come to Christ while his arms are open, and enter into the state of life while the door stands open, and now take mercy, while mercy may be had; they will not be persuaded. And yet they say, We hope God will be merciful.

Did

Did you never consider what he says, Isa. xxvii. 11. "It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will shew them no favour." If another man will not clothe you when you are naked, and feed you when you are hungry, you will say he is unmerciful. If he should cast you into prison, or beat and torment you, you would say he is unmerciful. And yet you will do a thousand times more against yourselves, even cast away both soul and body for ever, and never complain of your own unmercifulness. Yea, and God, who waited upon you all the while with his mercy, must be taken to be unmerciful, if he punish you after all this. Unless the holy God of heaven will give these wretches leave to trample upon his Son's blood, and do despite to the Spirit of grace, and set more lightly by saving mercy, than by the filth of their fleshly pleasures; and unless after all this he will save them by the mercy which they cast away, God himself must be called unmerciful. But he will be justified when he judgeth: and he will not stand or fall at the bar of a sinful worm.

2. From hence you may observe, 1. What a subtil tempter Satan is. 2. What a deceitful thing sin is. 3. What a foolish creature corrupted man is. A subtil tempter indeed, that can persuade the greatest part of the world to go wilfully into everlasting fire, when they have so many warnings and dissuasives. A deceitful thing is sin indeed, that can bewitch so many thousands to part with everlasting life, for a thing so base and utterly unworthy! A foolish creature is man, that will be cheated of his salvation for nothing, yea, for a known nothing; and that by an enemy, and a known enemy. You would think it impossible that any man should be persuaded for a little to cast himself into the fire, or water, to the destruction of his life; and yet men will be enticed to cast themselves into hell. If your natural lives were in your own hands, so that you should not die till you would kill yourselves, how long would most of you live? And yet when your everlasting life is so far in your own hands under God, that you cannot be undone till you undo yourselves, how few of you will forbear your own undoing? Ah, what a silly thing is man! And what a bewitching and befooling thing is sin!

Lastly:

Laſtly: you may hence learn, that the greateſt enemy to man is himſelf; and the greateſt judgment in this life that can befal him, is to be left to himſelf: and that the great work which grace has to do, is to ſave us from ourſelves: and the greateſt complaints of men ſhould be againſt themſelves; and that the greateſt work that we have to do ourſelves, is to reſiſt ourſelves; and the greateſt enemy which we ſhould daily pray, and watch, and ſtrive againſt, is our own hearts and wills; and the greateſt part of your work, if you would do good to others, and help them to heaven, is to ſave them from themſelves, even from their own blind underſtandings, and corrupted wills, and perverſe affections, and violent paſſions, and unruly ſenſes; I only name all theſe for brevity's ſake, and leave them to your further conſideration.

Well, now we have found out the great murderer of ſouls, (even men's ſelves, their own wills) what remains but that you confeſs this great iniquity before the Lord, and be humbled for it, and do ſo no more? To theſe three ends diſtinctly, I ſhall add a few words more. 1. Further to convince you. 2. To humble you. And 3. To reform you.

1. We know ſo much of the exceeding gracious nature of God who is willing to do good, and delights to ſhew mercy, that we have no reaſon to ſuſpect him of being the cauſe of our death. or to call him cruel. He made all good, and he preſerves and maintains all; the eyes of all things wait upon him, and he gives them their meat in due ſeaſon; he opens his hand, and ſatisfies the deſires of all the living. He is not only righteous in all his ways, (and therefore will deal juſtly) and holy in all his works, (and therefore not the author of ſin) but he is alſo good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works.

But as for man, we know his mind is dark, his will is perverſe, his affections carry him ſo headlong, that he is fitted by his folly and corruption to ſuch a work as the deſtroying of himſelf. "Let no man ſay when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man, (to draw him to ſin) but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed. Then when luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth ſin; and ſin when

it

it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death." You ſee here that ſin is the brat of your own concupiſcence, and that death is the offspring of your own ſin, and the fruit which it will yield you as ſoon as it is ripe. You have a treaſure of evil in yourſelves, as a ſpider hath of poiſon, from whence you are bringing forth hurt to yourſelves, and ſpinning ſuch webs as entangle your own ſouls.

2. It is evident that you are your own deſtroyers, in that you are ſo ready to entertain any temptation that is offered. Satan is ſcarce readier to move you to any evil, than you are ready to do as he would have you. If he would tempt your underſtanding to error and prejudice, you yield. If he would hinder you from good reſolutions, it is ſoon done. If he would kindle any vile affection or deſire in you, it is ſoon done: if he would drive you on to evil thoughts, or deeds, you are ſo free, that he needs no ſpur: if he would keep you from holy thoughts, and words, and ways, a little does it, you need no curb. You examine not his ſuggeſtions, nor reſiſt them with any reſolution, nor caſt them out as he caſts them in, nor quench the ſparks when he endeavours to kindle; but ſet in with him, and meet him half way, and embrace his motions, and tempt him to tempt you.

3. Your deſtruction is evidently owing to yourſelves, in that you reſiſt all who would help to ſave you. God would help and ſave you by his word, and you reſiſt it; it is too ſtrict for you. He would ſanctify you by his Spirit, but you reſiſt and quench it. If any man reprove you for your ſin, you fly in his face; if he tell you of your danger, you give him little thanks, but either bid him look to himſelf, or at beſt put him off with heartleſs thanks.

4. Moreover, it is apparent, that you are ſelf-deſtroyers, in that you draw the matter of your ſin and deſtruction even from the bleſſed God himſelf. You like not the contrivances of his wiſdom: you like not his juſtice, but take it for cruelty; you like not his holineſs, but are ready to think he is ſuch a one as yourſelves, Pſal. l. 21, and makes as light of ſin as you: you like not his truth, but would have his threatenings, even his peremptory threatenings prove falſe. And his goodneſs, which you ſeem moſt highly to approve,

you

you partly refift, as it would lead you to repentance; and partly abufe, to the ftrengthening of your fin, as if you might the more freely fin, becaufe God is merciful.

5. Yea, you fetch deftruction from the bleffed Redeemer, and death from the Lord of Life himfelf. Nothing more emboldens you in fin, than that Chrift has died for you; as if now the danger of death were over, and you might boldly venture: as if Chrift were become a fervant to Satan, and muft wait upon you while you are abufing him. And becaufe he is become the Phyfician of fouls, and is able to fave to the uttermoft all that come to God by him; you think he muft fave you whether you will come to God by him or no. So that a great part of your fins are occafioned by your bold prefumption upon the death of Chrift.

6. He gives them to you as the tokens of his love, and furniture for his fervice, and you turn them againft him to the pleafing of your flefh. You eat and drink to pleafe your appetite, and not for the glory of God. Your clothes you abufe to pride. Your riches draw your hearts from heaven. Your honours and applaufe puff you up. If you have health and ftrength, it makes you more fecure. Yea, other men's mercies are abufed by you to your hurt. If you fee their honours and dignity, you are provoked to envy them. If you fee their riches, you are ready to covet them. If you look upon beauty, you are ftirred up to luft. And it is well if godlinefs be not an eye-fore to you.

7. The very gifts which God beftows on you, and the ordinances of grace, you turn to fin. If you have better parts than others, you grow proud and felf-conceited. You take the bare hearing of your duty for fo good a work, as will excufe you for not obeying it. Your prayers are turned into fin, becaufe you regard iniquity in your hearts, Pfal. lxvi. 18, and depart not from iniquity, when you call on the name of the Lord. Your prayers are abominable, becaufe you turn away your ear from hearing the law, Prov. xxviii. 9. And are more ready to offer the facrifice of fools, (thinking you do God fome fpecial fervice) than to hear his word, and obey it, Eccleſ. v. 1.

And thus I might fhew you in many other cafes, how you turn all that comes near you to your own deftruction;

ſtruction; ſo clear is it that the ungodly are ſelf-deſtroyers, and that their perdition is of themſelves.

Methinks, now, upon the conſideration of what is ſaid, and the review of your own ways, you ſhould conſider what you have done, and be aſhamed and deeply humbled. If you be not, I pray you conſider theſe following truths.

1. To be your own deſtroyers, is to ſin againſt the deepeſt principle in your natures, even the principle of ſelf-preſervation. Every thing naturally deſires its own welfare or perfection. And will you ſet yourſelves to your own deſtruction? When you are commanded to love your neighbours as yourſelves, it is ſuppoſed that you naturally love yourſelves: but if you love your neighbours no better than yourſelves, it ſeems you would have all the world damned.

2. How extremely do you croſs your own intentions! I know you intend not your own damnation even when you are procuring it: you think you are but doing good to yourſelves, by gratifying the deſires of your fleſh. But, alas, it is as a draught of cold water in a burning fever, which increaſes the diſeaſe. If indeed you would have pleaſure, profit, or honour, ſeek them where they are to be found, not in the way to hell.

3. What pity is it that you ſhould do that againſt yourſelves, which none elſe in earth or hell can do. If all the world were combined againſt you, or all the devils in hell, they could not deſtroy you without yourſelves. And will you do that againſt yourſelves, which no one elſe can do? You have hateful thoughts of the devil, becauſe he is your enemy, and endeavours your deſtruction. And will you be worſe than devils to yourſelves? But thus it is with you, when you run into ſin, and refuſe to turn to the call of God; you do more againſt your own ſouls, than men or devils could do beſide. And if you ſhould ſet yourſelves to do yourſelves the greateſt miſchief, you could not deviſe a greater.

4. It will everlaſtingly make you your own tormentors in hell, to think that you brought yourſelves wilfully to that miſery. O what a griping thought it will be to think with yourſelves, That this was your own doing! That you were warned of this day, and warned

again,

again, but it would not do: that you wilfully sinned, and wilfully turned away from God: you had time as well as others, but you abused it: you had teachers as well as others, but you refused their instructions; you had holy examples, but you did not imitate them: you were offered Christ, and grace, and glory as well as others, but you preferred your fleshly pleasure; you had a price in your hands, but you had not an heart to lay it out. Can it choose but torment you to think of this your folly? O that your eyes were opened to see what you have done in the wilful wronging of your own souls! and that you better understood these words of God, Prov. viii. 33, 34, 35, 36, "Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain the favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me, love death."

CONCLUSION.

AND, now I am come to the conclusion of this work, my heart is troubled to think how I shall leave you: lest, after this, the flesh should still deceive you, and the world and the devil should keep you asleep, and I should leave you as I found you, till you awake in hell. Dear friends! I am so loth you should lie in everlasting fire, that I once more ask you what you resolve on? Will you turn or die? As far as you are gone in sin, do but now turn and come to Christ, and your souls shall live. If it were your bodies which we had to deal with, we might know what to do for you. Though you would not consent, you might be held or bound, while the medicine was poured down your throats, and hurtful things might be kept from you. But about your souls it cannot be so; we cannot convert you against your wills. There is no carrying mad-men to heaven in fetters. You may be condemned against your wills, because you sinned with your wills: but you cannot be saved against your wills. The wisdom of God has thought meet to lay man's salvation or destruction exceeding much upon the choice of his own will; that no man shall go to heaven who chuses not the way to heaven; and no man shall go to hell,

hell, but shall be forced to say, I have the thing I chose; my own will did bring me here. Now if I could but get you to be willing, to be thoroughly and resolutely willing, the work were more than half done. And, alas, must we lose our friends, and must they lose their God, their happiness, their souls, for want of this? I do again beseech you, as if it were on my bended knees, that you would hearken to your Redeemer, and Turn, that you may live. All you that have lived in ignorance, and carelessness, and presumption to this day: all you that have been drowned in the cares of the world; and have no desire after God, and eternal glory; all you that are enslaved to your fleshly desires, of meats, and drinks, sports, and lusts: and all you that know not the necessity of holiness, and never were acquainted with the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost upon your souls; that never embraced your blessed Redeemer by a lively faith, and with admiring and thankful apprehensions of his love, and that never felt a higher estimation of God and heaven, and a heartier love to them, than to the things below: I earnestly beseech you, not only for my sake, but for the Lord's sake, and for your soul's sake, that you go not one day longer in your present condition; but look about you, and cry to God for converting grace, that you may escape the plagues which are before you. Deny me any thing that ever I shall ask you for myself, if you will but grant me this. Nay, as ever you will do any thing at the request of the Lord that made you and redeemed you, deny him not this: for if you deny him this, he cares for nothing that you shall grant him. As ever you would have him hear your prayers, and grant your requests, and bless you at the hour of death, and day of judgment, deny not his request now in the day of your prosperity. O believe it, death and judgment, and heaven and hell, are other matters when you come near them, than they seem afar off.

Well, I hope that some of you are by this time purposing to turn and live; and that you are ready to ask me, as the Jews did Peter, when they were pricked in their hearts, What shall we do? How may we come to be truly converted? We are willing, if we did but know our duty. God forbid that we should chuse de-

ſtruction, by refuſing converſion, as hitherto we have done.

If theſe be the purpoſes of your hearts, I ſay of you as God did of a promiſing people, Deut. v. 28, 29, "They have well ſaid, all that they have ſpoken. O that there were ſuch a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always!" Your purpoſes are good: O that there were but a heart in you to perform theſe purpoſes! And, in hope hereof, I ſhall gladly give you direction what to do: and that but briefly, that you may the eaſier remember it for your practice.

DIRECTION I.

IF you would be converted and ſaved, labour to underſtand the neceſſity and nature of converſion.

Conſider what a lamentable condition you are in till your converſion, that you may ſee it is not a ſtate to be reſted in. You are under the guilt of all the ſins that ever you committed; and under the wrath of God, and the curſe of his law: you are bond-ſlaves to the devil, and daily employed in his work, againſt the Lord, yourſelves, and others: you are ſpiritually dead, as being void of the holy life, and nature, and image of the Lord. You are unfit for any holy work, and do nothing that is truly pleaſing to God. You are without any promiſe or aſſurance of his protection, and live in continual danger of his juſtice, not knowing what hour you may be ſnatched away to hell: and moſt certain to be damned, if you die in that condition. And nothing ſhort of converſion can prevent it. Whatever amendments are ſhort of true converſion, will never procure the ſaving of your ſouls. Keep the true ſenſe of this natural miſery, and of the neceſſity of converſion on your hearts. And then you muſt underſtand what it is to be converted: it is to have a new heart, or diſpoſition, and a new converſion.

Queſt. 1. For what muſt we turn?

Anſw. For theſe ends following, which you may attain: you ſhall hereby be made living members of Chriſt, and have an intereſt in him, and be renewed after the image of God, quickened with a new and heavenly life, and ſaved from the tyranny of Satan, and the dominion of ſin, and be juſtified from the curſe of the

the law, and have the pardon of all the ſins of your whole lives, and be accepted of God, and made his ſons, and have liberty with boldneſs to call him Father, and go to him by prayer in all your wants, with a promiſe of acceptance; you ſhall have the Holy Ghoſt to dwell in you, to ſanctify and guide you: you ſhall have part in the communion, and prayers of the ſaints: you ſhall be fitted for God's ſervice; and ſhall have the promiſe of this life, and that which is to come.

And, at death, your ſouls ſhall go to Chriſt; and at the day of judgment both ſoul and body ſhall be juſtified and glorified, and enter into your Maſter's joy.

All this the pooreſt beggar of you that is converted, ſhall certainly and endleſsly enjoy.

DIRECTION II.

IF you will be converted and ſaved, be much in ſecret, ſerious conſideration. Inconſiderateneſs undoes the world. Withdraw yourſelves often into ſecreſy, and meditate on the end for which you were made; on the life you have lived; the time you have loſt, the ſins you have committed; on the love, and ſufferings and fulneſs of Chriſt: on the danger you are in; on the nearneſs of death and judgment; and on the certainty and excellency of the joys of heaven; and on the certainty and terror of the torments of hell, and eternity of both; and on the neceſſity of converſion and a holy life.

DIRECTION III.

IF you will be converted and ſaved, attend upon the word of God, which is the ordinary means. Read the Scripture, or hear it read, and other holy writings, which do apply it, conſtantly; and attend on the public preaching of the word. As God will lighten the world by the ſun, and not by himſelf alone without it: ſo will he convert and ſave men by his miniſters, who are the lights of the world. When he has miraculouſly humbled Paul, he ſends Ananias to him, Acts ix. 10; and when he has ſent an angel to Cornelius, it is but to bid him ſend for Peter, who muſt tell him what he is to believe and do.

DIRECTION IV.

BETAKE yourselves to God in a course of earnest, constant prayer. Confess and lament your former lives, and beg his grace to illuminate and convert you. Beseech him to pardon what is past, and to give you his Spirit, and change your hearts and lives, and lead you in his ways, and save you from temptation. And ply his work daily, and be not weary of it.

DIRECTION V.

PRESENTLY give over your known and wilful sins. Make a stand, and go that way no farther. Be drunk no more: but avoid the place and occasion of it. Cast away your lusts and sinful pleasures with detestation. Curse and swear and rail no more: and if you have wronged any, restore as Zaccheus did. If you will commit again your old sins, what blessing can you expect on the means for conversion?

DIRECTION VI.

PRESENTLY, if possible, change your company. Not by forsaking your necessary relations, but your unnecessary sinful companions; and join yourselves with those that fear the Lord.

DIRECTION VII.

DELIVER up yourselves to the Lord Jesus as the Physician of your souls, that he may pardon you by his blood, and sanctify you by his Spirit, by his Word and Ministers, the instruments of his Spirit. "He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; there is no coming to the Father but by him," John xiv. 6. "Nor is there any other Name under heaven, by which you can be saved," Acts iv. 12. Study therefore his person and nature, and what he has done and suffered for you, and what he is to you; and what he will be: and how he is fitted to the full supply of all your necessities.

DIRECTION VIII.

IF you mean, indeed, to turn and live, do it without delay. If you be not willing to turn to-day, you are not willing to do it at all. Remember you are all

this

this while in your blood; under the guilt of many thousand sins, and under God's wrath, and you stand at the very brink of hell; there is but a step between you and death. And this is not a case for a man to be quiet in. Up therefore presently, and fly for your lives; as you would be gone out of your house, if it were all on fire over your head. O, if you did but know what danger you live in, and what daily unspeakable loss you do sustain, and what a safer and sweeter life you might live, you would not stand trifling, but presently turn. Multitudes miscarry who wilfully delay, when they are convinced that it must be done. Your lives are short and uncertain; and what a case are you in, if you die before you thoroughly turn? You have stayed too long already; and wronged God too long; sin gets strength and rooting, while you delay. Your conversion will grow more hard and doubtful. You have much to do, and therefore put not all off to the last, lest God forsake you, and give you up to yourselves, and then you are undone for ever.

DIRECTION IX.

IF you will turn and live, do it unreservedly, absolutely, and universally. Think not to capitulate with Christ, and divide your heart betwixt him and the world; and to part with some sins, and keep the rest. This is but self-deluding; you must forsake all you have, or else you cannot be his Disciples, Luke xiv. 26. 33. If you will not take God and heaven for your portion, and lay all below at the feet of Christ, but must needs also have your good things here, and have an earthly portion, and God and glory is not enough for you; it is in vain to dream of salvation on these terms: for it will not be. If you seem ever so religious, if yet it be but outside righteousness, this is as certain a way to death, as open profaneness, though it be plausible.

DIRECTION X.

IF you will turn and live, do it resolvedly, and stand not still deliberating, as if it were a doubtful case. Stand not wavering, as if you were yet uncertain, whether God or the flesh be the better master; or whether heaven or hell be the better end: or whether

ſin or holineſs be the better way. But away with your former luſts, and preſently, habitually, fixedly reſolve: be not one day of one mind, and the next of another, but be at a point with all the world, and reſolvedly give up yourſelves and all you have, to God. Now, while you are reading or hearing this, reſolve. Before you ſleep another night, reſolve. Before you ſtir from the place, reſolve. Before Satan have time to take you off, reſolve. You never turn indeed, till you do reſolve; and that with a firm, and unchangeable Reſolution.

And now I have done my part in this work, that you may turn at the call of God, and live. What will become of it, I cannot tell. I have caſt the ſeed at God's command: but it is not in my power to give the increaſe. I can go no farther with my meſſage: I cannot bring it to your heart, or make it work: I cannot do your parts for you, to entertain it. I cannot do God's part by opening your heart to cauſe you to entertain it: nor can I ſhew you heaven or hell to your eye-ſight, nor give you new and tender hearts.

But, O thou that art the gracious Father of Spirits, thou haſt ſworn thou delighteſt not in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live; deny not thy bleſſing to theſe perſuaſions and directions, and ſuffer not thine enemies to triumph in thy ſight, and the great Deceiver of ſouls to prevail againſt thy Son, thy Spirit, and thy Word. O pity poor, unconverted ſinners, that have no hearts to pity or help themſelves: command the blind to ſee, the deaf to hear, and the dead to live, and let not ſin and death be able to reſiſt thee. Awake the ſecure: reſolve the unreſolved: confirm the wavering; and let the eyes of ſinners that read theſe lines, be next employed in weeping over their ſins; and bring them to themſelves, and to thy Son, before their ſin have brought them to perdition. If thou ſay but the word, theſe poor endeavours ſhall proſper to the winning of many a ſoul to their everlaſting Joy, and thine everlaſting Glory. Amen.

An HYMN.

AND am I born to die?
To lay this body down?
And muſt my trembling ſpirit fly
Into a world unknown?
A land of deepeſt ſhade,
Unpierced by human thought!
The dreary regions of the dead,
Where all things are forgot!

Soon as from earth I go,
What will become of me?
Eternal happineſs or woe
Muſt then my portion be!
Wak'd by the trumpet's ſound,
I from my grave ſhall riſe,
And ſee the Judge with glory crown'd,
And ſee the flaming ſkies!

How ſhall I leave my tomb?
With triumph or regret?
A fearful, or a joyful doom?
A curſe, or bleſſing meet?
Will angel-bands convey
Their brother to the bar?
Or devils drag my ſoul away
To meet its ſentence there?

Who can reſolve the doubt,
That hovers in my breaſt?
Shall I be with the damn'd caſt out;
Or number'd with the bleſt?
I muſt from God be driven,
Or with my Saviour dwell,
Muſt come at his command to heaven,
Or elſe depart to hell.

O thou,

O thou, that wouldſt not have
One wretched ſinner die,
Who diedſt thyſelf my ſoul to ſave
From endleſs miſery!
Shew me the way to ſhun
Thy dreadful wrath ſevere,
That, when thou comeſt on thy throne,
I may with joy appear!

Thou art thyſelf the way,
Thyſelf in me reveal;
So ſhall I ſpend my life's ſhort day
Obedient to thy will;
So ſhall I love my God,
Becauſe he firſt lov'd me,
And praiſe thee in thy bright abode,
To all eternity.

FINIS.